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JANUARY 2013
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ISSUE 201

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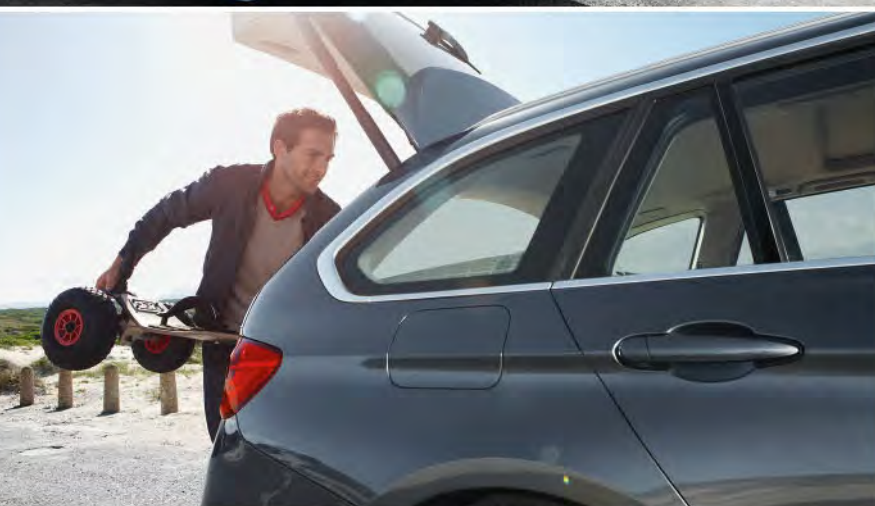
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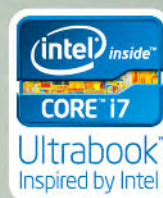
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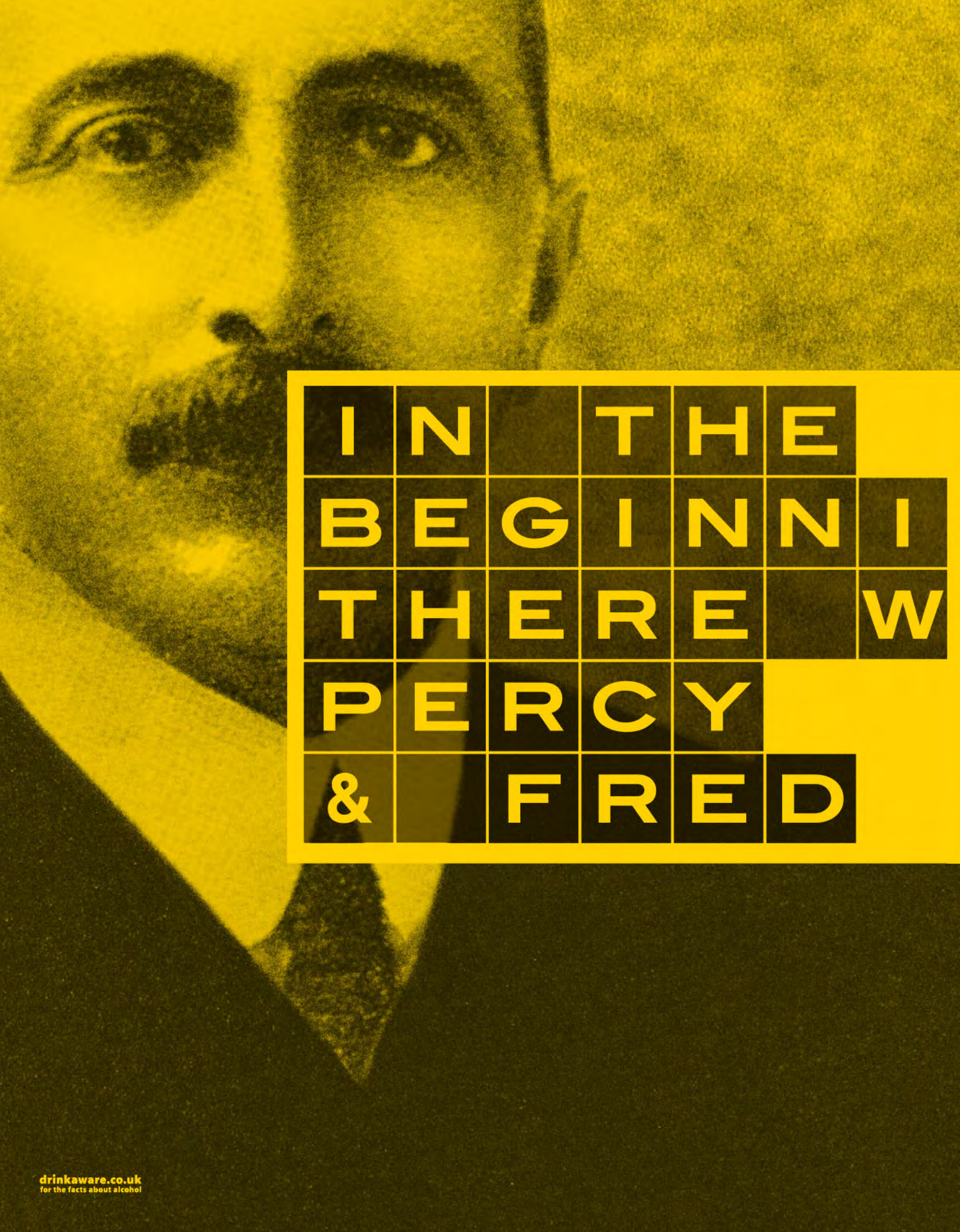
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GREAT BRITISH CIDER
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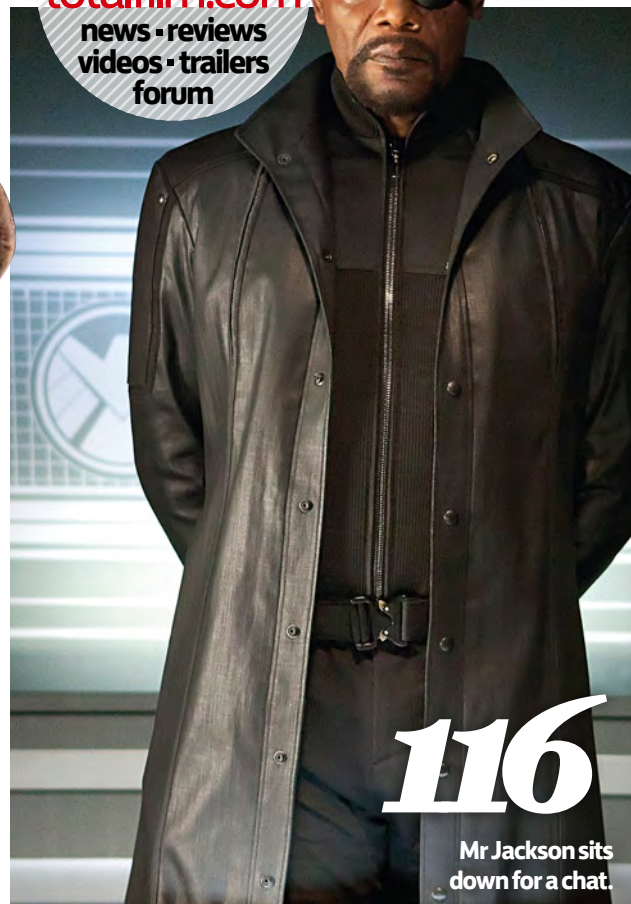
Helen Hunt stars in *The Sessions*. Read all about it on p78.

Bill Murray makes us laugh on p100.



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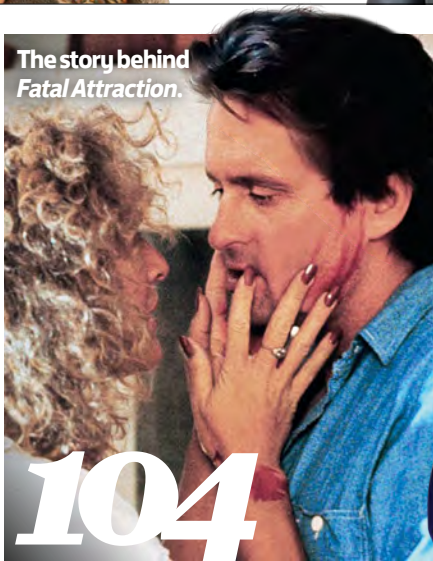
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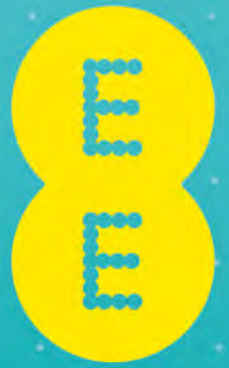
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Knock, knock, who's there...?

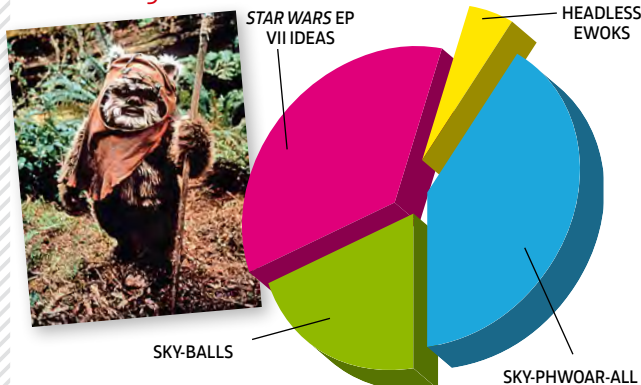
It's only us, the mag that knows you want to read about EVERYthing movies, which is why this issue celebrates *The Hobbit* but is also more packed than a dwarf's rucksack with incoming comedy gems, Oscar contenders, our review of 2012, a chat with our favourite Ghostbuster and loads more. And it's why you should subscribe for more of the same with our bargainous offer right now (a year's subscription for £25.99, page 122) meaning you just have to stand expectantly at your letterbox each month rather than schlepping down the corner shop in your slippers. Mmmn, precious! Go on, treat yourself. Enjoy the issue!

Jane
JANE CROWTHER,
 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

totalfilm@futurenet.com

The pie

What you wrote to us about this month...



Total Film: full of your favourite movies. What's not to love?

STAR LETTER

★ I have read your magazine since day one back in '97. It's been like a third parent to me; it's seen me through puberty, my first kiss, break-ups, exams and marriage. Through all this, it's guided me to the films to watch and the films to avoid – through the dawn of DVD, Blu-ray winning the high-definition battle and now the gimmick of 3D. Like all good relationships there have been ups and downs. Four stars for *The Day After Tomorrow*? Please. Anyway, it's been one hell of a ride. Here's to another 15 years.

JAMIE GRIFFIN, VIA EMAIL

Cheers Jamie. It's our pleasure to always have been right there for you (well, apart from during puberty, when we would have discreetly gone out for a long walk). And fair play, we regretted those four stars the morning after The Day After Tomorrow. Jamie and everyone else with a letter printed will receive a copy of Magic Mike, out on Blu-ray/DVD on 26 November courtesy of StudioCanal. Didn't send an address? Email it! We're not taking off so much as a sock until you do.



You're so vein

➤ I've just had what I can only describe as a 'Team America moment'... There I am, excitedly flicking through the first few pages of the awesome 200th issue of TF, and then it happened. I got to page 17 and let out an almighty, "Fuck yeah!" Wolverine, tensed up to the max, looking as though he's about to do his berserker thing. Roll on July 2013!

JOHN HORTON, STAFFORDSHIRE
We know, right? He looks like he could rip an armour-plated rhino a new one. Or at least make a scratching post very sorry it was born.



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What you're saying online...

TOTALFILM.COM/FORUM

Who'd be the worst character to bring home to your folks?

CaptainCrazy

Killer Joe. He has horrible table manners and if he didn't like the chicken he should've just said so.

Ssralph617

Janet Leigh as Marion Crane. Mother would hate her.

Alexr

Any character from a Michael Bay movie (due to the risk of extensive collateral damage); Thelma or Louise (my dad hates female drivers); or Bella Swan (because we'd all get done for murder).

Join the cine-chatter on the *Total Film* forum...
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You filled in the blank in this *Ghostbusters* tagline: "They ain't afraid of no..."

"...double negatives" Dan Desrochers

"...el Edmonds" Adam Shaw

"...remix of the theme song by Rihanna" Roger Balfour

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We set up #StarWarsMovies and these are the ones we found impressive... most impressive:

'Rita, Sue And Boba Fett Too' @cjcheesecake

'It's A Parent Trap!' @ajcarolan

'The Pink Bantha' @Hector_Chicken

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Licence to heckle

I saw *Skyfall* having deliberately not read any reviews or let myself get excited. I enjoyed it but was also rather disappointed. The whole 'bad guy needing to be arrested as part of his plan' thing was a copy of, and much poorer version of, the Joker in *The Dark Knight*. The Tube chase has been done so many times in films over the years and has been done so much better (*Lethal Weapon 3* and *Total Recall* are just two examples). And then it all just descended into Bond and M being *Home Alone*. Setting little traps in preparation for another house-under-siege setting? Another clichéd situation, which has also been done better many, many times before. There were some great parts though. And it was nice to finally have the Bond theme and some humour. It only took three films to get there. Oh, and the CGI Komodo dragons were rubbish too.

BARNES CALVERT, VIA EMAIL

While watching *Skyfall* at my local cinema, when Bond says to M and his groundskeeper, mid-battle with Silva's men, "Get to the chapel!", the person sat directly behind me shouted in an Arnold Schwarzenegger-type voice, "GEET TO DA CHAPEEEELL!!!" Safe to say the entire cinema was almost paralytic with laughter. I just thought that was worth sharing.

JAMIE MURPHY, VIA EMAIL
You can't beat a fellow viewer bellowing in an Arnie voice at a crucial moment. How much funnier would Blue Valentine have been if you'd had someone constantly booming "Consider that a divorce!" all the way through it?

'Should I really be taking parenting tips from the kid out of Jerry Maguire?'

Jeff, who waits at home

That was a lovely letter Jeff Bridges sent you guys last month (*TF200*). But I have to ask, is he getting a Blu-ray too, seeing as his letter was printed? He has more than enough money to buy them himself and he probably gets them for free anyway! So if it's OK with Jeff, can I have his one? I'm sure The Dude won't mind.
AARON HEALY, VIA EMAIL
That's fine, but you can be the one who breaks the news to Jeff that he's not getting a new copy of blockbuster smash *Men In Black 3*, then have the look on his little face on your conscience. It'd be like telling him he's got to watch *Tron: Legacy* on a loop for eternity. Besides, you're getting Magic Mike, which makes *MIB3* look like *MIB2*.

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OFFICE SPACED

Chatter 'gems' overheard in the *Total Film* office this month...

» "What happened in that lighthouse?!?"
» "PR grills are going to be gotten up in!"
» "Spiders don't yawn." » "Camels don't yawn." » "Why is everything I say a red card and not a yellow?" » "How often do you have fish fingers?"





Afraid of the bark

My five-year-old is scared of dogs, so in an attempt to try and counter this, I recently told him that "dogs can smell fear". Should I really be taking parenting tips from the kid out of *Jerry Maguire*? Will Social Services take him and his brother away from me if they find out?

NATHAN BENNETT, LONDON

Parenting tips from Jerry Maguire? Well, probably a lot better than taking them from The Shining.

Tex mania

In issue 199, two separate films reviewed by different people were both likened to the works of Tex Avery (*Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted* and *Hotel Transylvania*). Mr Avery was an undisputed master of his craft and his work is defined by grossly OTT reactions, constant fourth-wall breaking, insane visual puns and wild digressions from logic. In all of these fields he has yet to be equalled. To describe these two mildly wacky animated movies as 'Avery-esque' would be like describing *Taken 2* as Hitchcockian because it's "a bit suspenseful". May I suggest that the offending reviewers are made to watch Tex Avery's complete works until their eyeballs pop out of their sockets and explode?

MARK CLEGG, SUNDERLAND

It wasn't our intention to insult the great man by comparison, Mark, merely to provide a frame of reference. Now, let's makes amends by watching the David Lean-esque Battleship.

Photo misfit

I went abroad this summer and just out of interest bought the local film magazine. There was a feature on

upcoming comic-book movies, with a photograph of Megan Fox dressed up as Wonder Woman, a picture of Scarecrow from *Batman Begins* entitled *The Dark Knight* and a photograph of the shitty 2003 Hulk, entitled 'A screenshot from *The Avengers*'!

RADEK, MALLOWS

Hulk thanks tiny reader for flagging picture/caption balls-up. However, Hulk a little uncomfortable with word 'shitty'. Tiny Mr Ang do his best; true, making Hulk film that was one-part hitting to nine-parts arty angst was slightly misunderstanding the brief, but Hulk ready to talk 80 Per Cent More Tank-Throwing Special Edition, when tiny Mr Ang ready to pick up the phone.



Smash talk

On Saturday 13 October, sat at home with a beer in my hand, I cemented my place in history as the last person on Earth to see *Avengers Assemble*. It was OK. Alright, it was very good. OK, I admit it was excellent. Fine, it was pure entertainment and truly stunning in places, making me laugh and cheer throughout. I am sure the Hulk would have described it as a 'smash' and I have to agree. Now I am at peace. **MARTIN JACKSON**, MILTON KEYNES *Hulk pleased tiny reader 'at peace', wherever that is. Hulk also disappointed tiny reader didn't make effort to see Avengers Assemble at cinema; ancillary earnings can take an age to come through.*

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The next issue of **TOTAL FILM** on sale 21 December

Editor-in-Chief Jane Crowther (JC)

jane.crowther@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_jane Annie Walker (Bridesmaids)

Deputy Editor **Jamie Graham (JG)** jamie.graham@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_jamie Rupert Pupkin (The King Of Comedy)

Managing Editor **Kathryn Twyford** kathryn.twyford@futurenet.com
@kathryntwyford Punksutawney Phil (Groundhog Day)

Art Director **Steven Whitchurch** steven.whitchurch@futurenet.com
Uncle Fester (The Addams Family)

Reviews Editor **Matthew Leyland (ML)** matthew.leyland@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_mattl Borat (Borat)

Associate Editor **Rosie Fletcher (RF)** rosie.fletcher@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_rosie Heather Mooney (Romy And Michele's High School Reunion)

News Editor **Richard Jordan (RJ)** richard.jordan@futurenet.com
@richard_jordan Brick Tamland (Anchorman)

Designer **Louise Brock** louise.brock@futurenet.com
@louisebrock82 Dug (Up)

Digital Designer **Emily Ip** emily.ip@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_emily Kung Fu Panda (Kung Fu Panda)

Senior Picture Editor **Sarah Tully** sarah.tully@futurenet.com
Barbara Windsor (Carry On Camping)

Online Editor **Sarah Cohen** sarah.cohen@futurenet.com
@totalfilm_sarah Max Fischer (Rushmore)

Deputy Online Editor **Sam Ashurst** sam.ashurst@futurenet.com
@samashurst Gonzo (The Muppet Movie)

Content Producer **Matt Maytum (MMA)** matt.maytum@futurenet.com
@mattmaytum Alvy Singer (Annie Hall)

CONTRIBUTORS

West Coast Editor Tony Horkins (TH) **Hollywood Correspondent** Jenny Cooney Carillo (JCC)
Contributing Editors Kevin Harley (KH), James Mottram (JM), Matt Mueller (MM), Jamie Russell (JR), Neil Smith (NS) **Contributors** Richard Ayoade, George Bass (GB), Tara Bennett (TB), Paul Bradshaw (PB), Matt Chapman (MC), Nick Chen (NC), Tom Dawson (TD), Emma Dibdin (ED), Nathan Dittum (ND), Matt Glasby (MG), Ali Gray (AG), Carmen Gray (CG), Emma Johnston (EJ), Ellen E. Jones (EEJ), Stephen Kelly, (Ske), Philip Kemp (PK), Simon Kinnear (SK), Joe McCabe (JMc), Ken McIntyre (KM), Jane Mulkerrins (JMc), Jayne Nelson (JN), Oliver Pfeiffer (OP), Jason Pickersgill, Rob Power (RP), Kate Stables (KS), Lizzy Thomas, Josh Winning (JW), Alex Zane
Thanks to Paul Bradshaw, Emma Johnston (subbing), Eva de Romarate, Sarah Gerrard-Jones (pictures), Becky Roberts, Joanna Sproule (work experience), Liz Hawkins Hildy Johnson (His Girl Friday) (Forum admin), Jonesy Willy Wonka (Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory), Kiba Neal Page (Planes, Trains & Automobiles) (Forum mods)

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Director of Inserts **Nick Weatherall** 020 7042 4155
Digital Advertising Manager **Andrew Church** 020 7042 4237

CIRCULATION AND LICENSING

Trade Marketing Manager **Jonathan Beeson** 020 7042 4023
International Account Manager **Michael Peacock** 01225 732 316
Licensing And Syndication Director **Regina Erak** +44 (0)1225 732 359

MARKETING

Direct Marketing Manager **Ashley Hickman** 020 7042 4026
Marketing Executive **Tilly Michell** 020 7042 4077
Group Marketing Manager **Sam Wight** 020 7042 4061

PRINT AND PRODUCTION

Prepress **Gary Stuckey**, **Paul Bush**, **Steve Wood**
Production Co-ordinator **Keely Miller**
Production Manager **Mark Constance**

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Publisher **Lee Nutter**
Group Publishing Director **Clair Porteous**
Creative Director **Robin Abbott**
Editorial Director **Jim Douglas**
All email addresses are firstname.lastname@futurenet.com

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Chief Executive Mark Wood **Non-executive Chairman** Peter Allen **Group Finance Director** Graham Harding
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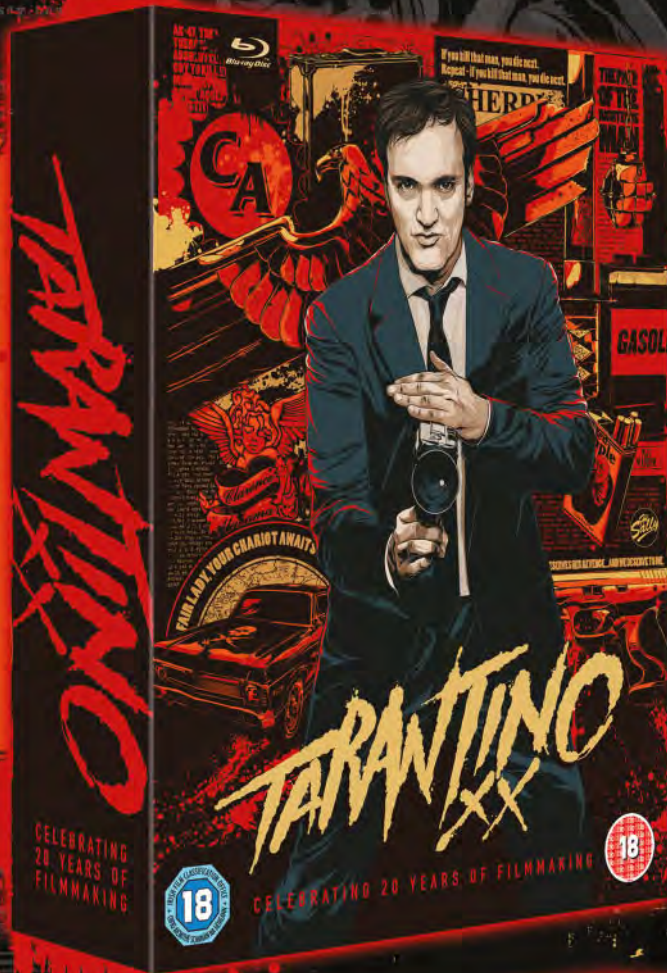
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NEW PICS!

Man at arms

IRON MAN 3 | Tony Stark tackles his demons
in a threequel with serious firepower.

What exactly does a genius, billionaire, philanthropist playboy do after saving the world? More importantly, how can anyone possibly follow up *Avengers Assemble*?

"You can dissect why it was the right movie with the right people and the right director at the right time," says Robert Downey Jr. of summer's super-fest, "but

we feel the same way about *Iron Man 3* now." Whatever the feeling, it's a tough act to follow.

"We're not aiming for bigger, necessarily," says Marvel Studios producer Kevin Feige. "We're aiming for different and fresh and new." But according to director Shane Black, it's more about the intensity. "It's all about capturing that lightening in a bottle feel," he adds, "about trying to get as much into this as we can. We're looking to get a ton of thrills into a short space, >>

**LEADING
MAN**

After the S.H.I.E.L.D. focused antics of *IM2*, the threequel is going back to basics. "This is a very Tony Stark-centric film," assures Marvel chief Kevin Feige.

**GHOSTS
OF THE PAST**

Stark's arc reactor was built to keep himself alive after being captured in the first movie by terrorist group The Ten Rings, named after the power source of its leader, The Mandarin.

**'It's all about capturing
that lightning
in a bottle feel'**

SHANE BLACK

GOING FOR GOLD

As the trailer's images of Stark 'becoming one' with the suit suggest, the new Mark VIII armour has a strong nanotechnology element – inspired by the comics' 'Extremis' story arc.

<< to make a nice little stew for you.”

Time to start cranking up the AC/DC...

Back on his own again after freelancing for S.H.I.E.L.D., the super-suited vigilante is unusually quip-free in a dark and stormy teaser trailer that proves life without Loki is more dangerous than ever. Faced with a new threat in the form of a deadly nano-tech virus known as Extremis and Ben Kingsley's arch supervillain, The Mandarin, Tony Stark's world is about to come crashing down. Literally. Leader of the Afghani terrorist cell that strapped an electromagnet to his chest in the first movie, The Mandarin is Iron Man's greatest adversary – wearing 10 mysterious rings that give him the power to shoot fire, ice and electricity from his fingertips – and is wasting no time in bringing the fight right to Stark's crumbling front door.

Team building

He might not have the rest of the Avengers to back him up this time around, but at least he won't be on his own. With Guy Pearce and Rebecca Hall joining the cast and Gwyneth Paltrow, Jon Favreau and Don Cheadle (whose War Machine armour has been given a patriotic, stars-and-stripes paint job – pictured on the previous page) returning as Stark's closest allies, Iron Man has built up quite an entourage of his own.

“The remarkable thing that Jon Favreau managed to do when he forged these movies was establishing a precedent of espionage, high-tech, *Top Gun*-style thrills, coupled with romantic comedy, >>



Stark's the man: (main) Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.); (above inset) the action begins; (right) Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow) returns as Stark's girlfriend.



Waiting game: (main) Iron Man chills; (inset) Ben Kingsley's Mandarin lurks.

«< in a strange way,” says Black. “That’s always been the mainstay of these movies. That’s one of my favourite things about it.”

But with Paltrow’s Pepper Potts now a permanent fixture in Stark’s home life, the playboy image might have to be dialled down a few notches. “There’s never been a movie like this where the lead guy is in



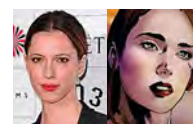
be the most self-contained super-story since the original *Iron Man* back in 2008. “It’s not a serious movie,” explains Feige, “but we seriously dig into exploring more of Tony. The trick is just trying to make great movies. We try to make them all great, all different and all fresh. What you’ll see in *Iron Man 3* is some very unique directions that were taken.”

For *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* director (and long-time series script-fixer) Shane Black, taking the baton from Jon Favreau has been a smooth handover. “Jon was available to give me all kinds of

advice, and Marvel has such an effective special effects machine that they could hold my hand and keep me free to concentrate on story and character and scale,” enthuses the director. “You have to find a way to make sure that the story that’s emerging is still ongoing and, by the time you’ve finished, will be something resembling the culmination of a trilogy,” he adds with a smile. “I think we’re getting there...” **PB**

ETA | 26 APRIL *Iron Man 3* opens next spring. For more news, check out totalfilm.com

The new faces of Iron Man 3



MAYA HANSEN
REBECCA HALL

A respected bio-technical brain surgeon and an old friend of Stark’s, Hansen made a name for herself by refining and re-developing the same super-soldier formula that spawned Captain America. When Hansen creates the powerful Extremis virus, she becomes desperate to prove its potential.



ALDRICH KILLIAN
GUY PEARCE

Working with Maya Hansen at the Futurefarm Corporation, bio-geneticist Dr Killian is jointly responsible for developing Extremis. Intending to use the formula for good, imagining a world where all diseases can be cured with an injection, he starts to think who else might appreciate his work when his funding is cut.



THE MANDARIN
BEN KINGSLEY

Half English, half Chinese (and related to Genghis Khan), The Mandarin is a scientific genius, a martial arts master – and Iron Man’s greatest archenemy. Harnessing a mysterious alien power in his 10 rings, the terrorist leader can shoot flames, ice, high-speed vortexes and disintegration beams from his bare hands.



COLDBLOOD
JAMES BADGE DALE

An ex-Colonel, Eric Savin stepped on a landmine and woke up reconstructed as a cyborg. Ditching his uniform, ‘Coldblood’ became a gun for hire, fighting for whoever pays the best. Granted superhuman speed, strength and stamina by his robot limbs and steel-reinforced skeleton, he’s more machine than man now... twisted and evil.



FIREPOWER
ASHLEY HAMILTON

Jack Taggart was an airforce test pilot before volunteering to drive an experimental super-suit designed to take down Iron Man. As ‘Firepower’, Taggart can fly at super-sonic speed, fire surface-to-air missiles, mini-grenades, arm-mounted cannons and a heat beam laser – not to mention the tactical nuke he keeps hidden up his sleeve.

‘It’s not a serious movie, but we dig into exploring Tony’

KEVIN FEIGE

a relationship with the girl he’s going home to telling him what to do,” laughs Downey Jr.. “But this film has a lot of breadth to it. We realised at the beginning of *Iron Man 2*, Tony was dying, then he had a party, then he was drunk... and some people were going, ‘We don’t like him!’ The main thing is Shane’s storytelling, and that emotional depth without taking itself too seriously.”

Pipped to spearhead Marvel’s post-Avengers ‘Phase 2’, *Iron Man 3* will set the tone for the next chapter of the studio’s ever expanding universe, as well as promising to



BRING IT!

PAIN & GAIN | The rock gets the guns loaded for Michael Bay's smallest film...

➤ Move over all you puny hipsters, you mumbling girly-men... *This* is the new face of the American indie film!

Kicking down doors, laying the smackdown and putting some major mainstream boots to the skinny-jeaned asses of the smart set, Dwayne Johnson isn't just ready for *Pain & Gain*, he was born ready. The passion project of Michael Bay, it's the 'little' comedy he's been waiting to make for almost 10 years – before all those pesky *Transformers* kept getting in the way. Paired up with Mark Wahlberg, The Rock plays one half of a Miami bodybuilding duo who get mixed up in

extortion, kidnapping and murder. It might sound like an excuse for Bay to mix slow-motion muscle flexing with slow-motion violence, but it's actually based on the true story of two Florida knuckleheads now lifting dumbbells on death row. "It's a great character piece, and it's an edgy black comedy," says Bay of his micro-budgeted crime caper, "it's something like *Pulp Fiction*." Whether it will turn out to be Tarantino meets *Pumping Iron* or Michael Bay meets his match remains to be seen, but if he puts that picture of The Rock on the poster, we're already sold. **PB**

 **ETA | 3 MAY** *Pain & Gain* opens next summer. For the latest news and video check out totalfilm.com

Talking Rock

Life lessons from Dwayne Johnson via Twitter...

When u walk up to opportunity's door – don't knock on it. Kick that bitch in, smile and introduce yourself. #GetAfterIt

Be the person that when your feet touch the floor in the morning the devil says, "aww shit.. they're up".
#BootsToAsses

Named one of @menshealthmag 100 FITTEST MEN OF ALL TIME. #46. 46 is also the # of pancakes I crush in a day. #1PancakeCrusher

Temperature outside: Cold & nipply. Action: AM cardio. Result: Kicked ass.
#PushThePaceAndCoverThoseNips

I would love to meet the person who is starting rumors of my death – to show them how a dead foot feels up their ass!

Superhero smackdown



➤ The Avengers 2 and Justice League are slated to go head-to-head in summer 2015. In anticipation of a super-scrap, we pit the heroes and heroines from both über-teams against each other to see who'd come out on top. Now, we want a nice clean fight...



SUPERMAN ★ VS ★ THOR

POWERS Super-strength, super-speed, flight, x-ray vision

With biceps the size of boulders and a neck measurement bigger than your waist, Superman's the alien with it all – not only can he fly rings around you, he can also crush you with his bare hands and see right through you. Literally.

POWERS Invulnerability, Mjöllnir (Hammer)

This guy's a God. No really, we mean it. Born of Asgard and next in line for the Asgardian throne, Thor has control over thunder and lightning thanks to his trusty weapon, the hammer Mjöllnir. He's also partial to a coffee or 12.

VERDICT Neither are of this Earth, which makes them pretty evenly matched. Superman's impressive collection of powers may just give him the edge. That said, Thor is invulnerable...



WONDER WOMAN ★ VS ★ BLACK WIDOW

POWERS Super-strength, super-speed, Lasso of Truth, unbreakable bracelets, magic tiara

If accessories are a woman's best friend, Wonder Woman beats them all. Equipped with a mythic artillery that would turn even Iron Man's armour suit green with envy, she's powerful, beautiful and stylish.

POWERS Adept with all weapons, hand-to-hand combat and manipulation

Black Widow's first big screen appearance saw her fighting with Iron Man and showing off a flippy move that left us slack-jawed. *Avengers Assemble* showed she was good with the mind games, too.

VERDICT Widow's a mortal, Wonder Woman's emphatically not. Strip the latter of her accessories, though (easy), and we could have a very interesting fist fight on our hands...



BATMAN ★ VS ★ IRON MAN

POWERS Exoskeleton, utility belt, Batpod, Batmobile

Batman's rebooting after Nolan's epic trilogy, so who knows what form he'll take in the *Justice League* movie. Things we know: he'll have a Batsuit, some awesome wheels (presumably) and that all-important utility belt. Strepsils voice TBC.

POWERS Super IQ, flying armoured suit with equipped weapons

Without his armour suit Tony Stark's almost as vulnerable as the rest of us. With it, he's a full-on superdude. Even more so since his insides are made of pure bravado, meaning Stark has the guts to do things the rest of the human race would balk at.

VERDICT Both come heavily armed, both possess a certain swagger and a lot of cash. This match could be a close one – though pushing Batman's 'parent issue' buttons could leave him sobbing in the dirt.



GREEN LANTERN ★ VS ★ HULK

POWERS Power ring

Warner Bros may be considering rebooting Green Lantern sans Ryan Reynolds, but we doubt they'll mess with the mythology. Hal Jordan comes armed with a blingy ring that he can use to create anything his imagination comes up with. Guns, shields, knives... The sky's the limit.

POWERS Strength, thunderclap, accelerated healing

It's not easy being green, but it helps if you're a massive giant with muscles that put Schwarzenegger to shame. A mountainous, hulking brute – 'smashing' is his forte. We've yet to see his patented Thunderclap on the big screen, though...

VERDICT These guys could do some serious damage if they ever met. With Green Lantern's ability to create anything, and Hulk's desire to smash everything, we genuinely have no idea who'd win.



THE FLASH

POWERS Super-speed, superhuman endurance. Not only can The Flash run, like, really, really fast, he's also equipped with superhuman endurance, which means he can keep going without ever running out of puff. In the comics, he can also travel through time using the cosmic treadmill and vibrate his way through solid walls. Oh yes.

VERDICT Captain America's pretty handy when it comes to combat, but how can he fight somebody he can't keep up with? The Flash's super-speed could be the Cap's downfall.

POWERS Super-strength, vibranium shield. A super-soldier from World War II, Captain America is a symbol for hope and justice in the US of A. More than that, he's a superhero with fancy togs and an even fancier shield, which can withstand heavy fire – and can also be used as a destructive circular boomerang. Not bad.



AQUAMAN

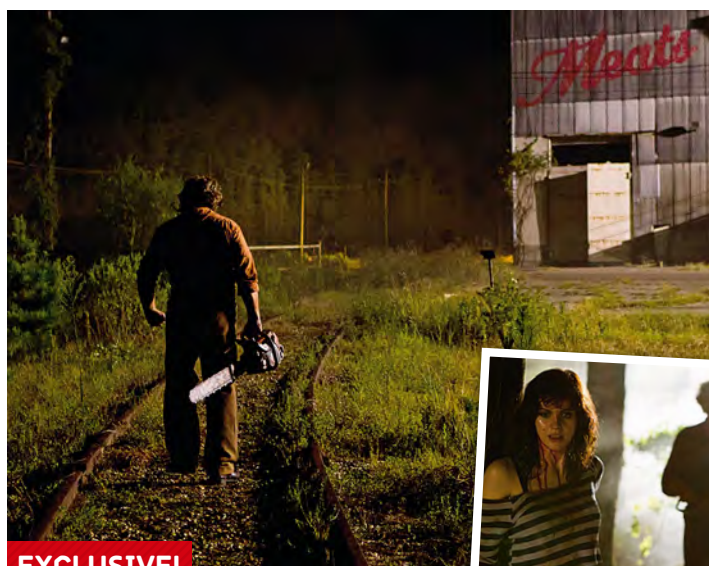
POWERS Ability to breathe under water, harpoon, can communicate with sea-life, telepathy.

A dweller of both the land and the sea, Aquaman is the ruler of underwater kingdom Atlantis. With an impressive array of super-powers under his shiny belt, he's a formidable fellow who can do some serious damage no matter what terrain he finds himself in.

VERDICT Aquaman's superhuman powers mean he'd probably get the better of Hawkeye, though in a land-based face-off the bow may best the harpoon. JW

POWERS Ability with a bow and arrow, martial arts. Though he has no superhuman abilities to speak of, Hawkeye is a master marksman, an expert hand-to-hand fighter and an all-round tough cookie. Put a bow in his hands and he's got the touch of a god, as we saw in *Avengers Assemble*. Hawkeye also never leaves home without his quiver of customised trick arrows.

ETA 25 JANUARY 2015 *The Avengers 2* and *Justice League* both open in summer 2015. For the latest news and features check out totalfilm.com



EXCLUSIVE!

Leatherface is back!

Texas Chainsaw 3D director John Luessenhop on why his franchise reboot's a cut above.

1 IT FOLLOWS ON FROM THE ORIGINAL

"The last one was a remake and then following that was a prequel. This is the sequel to the original '70s film, but the main story takes place today and is connected to the past. I'm disregarding the other sequels. The tone changed in the latter installments. It became very campy."

2 IT PAYS RESPECT TO TOBE HOOPER

"I'm a huge fan of the original and the more I watched what Tobe Hooper did as a young guy the more it inspired me in terms of the composition and the shots. I studied the original film and I made a list of about 12 or 13 things I really liked about it. I took those and sprinkled them through the new script in different ways."

3 GUNNER HANSEN AND MARILYN BURNS ARE BACK

"Gunnar Hansen walked down the driveway and saw a completely rebuilt house from the original. He got this rush of emotion just remembering what it was like the first time. Working with Hansen and Burns was a bit of

pressure but it was a lot of fun. They felt like they had a stake in this one that they didn't have in the others. I think they've earned it."

4 LEATHERFACE HAS GROWN UP

"That was a talking point all through developing the film: what would he be like today? Which meant you had to answer the question: what was he really like in the original? He was very child-like, subservient, browbeaten, but he's also, at times, humanised. We believe that he'd be a bit more grizzly and mature, but not developed as a human being. I didn't want him to be the Terminator."

5 IT'S IN 3D...

"3D was assigned to me before I started – it came from the producer of the studio. I think it helps this movie, though. The 3D was shot, it wasn't converted from 2D. Saying that, I'm not a huge 3D person. It works for this movie – it really does – but I'm not sure it works for everyone." **SKE**

ETA 9 JANUARY *Texas Chainsaw 3D* opens next year. For the latest features and video check out totalfilm.com

EXCLUSIVE!

Mob rules

GANGSTER SQUAD | Josh Brolin and Ryan Gosling fight fire with fire in 1940s LA. Director Ruben Fleischer tells Buzz about his historic crime opus.

➤ *Little Caesar, The Public Enemy, The Roaring Twenties, Angels With Dirty Faces*: just a selection of the iconic gangster flicks to carry the Warner Bros shield in the studio's 1930s heyday.

Small wonder then that *Zombieland* director Ruben Fleischer gets such a kick from seeing his third feature – a bullet-strewn mob thriller inspired by the real LAPD squadron charged with stopping organised crime and preventing the hostile takeover of the City of Angels – put out under the same illustrious banner.

“When the studio decided to make the film, part of the ambition was to pay tribute to that amazing history and tradition,” reveals the softly-spoken 37-year-old. “So I went back and watched a ton of the original Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney movies and really

developed an appreciation for them.” No less influential, though, were mob classics of a fresher vintage: *The Godfather, The Untouchables, LA Confidential*. Indeed, one of Fleischer’s proudest achievements was what he calls his “*GoodFellas* shot”: three perfect minutes of uninterrupted Steadicam work that follows rakish cop Jerry Wooters (Ryan Gosling) as he arrives at and enters a glamorous nightclub where a torch singer is entertaining ruthless mobster kingpin Mickey Cohen (Sean Penn).

Another sequence, alas, caused headaches of a thornier sort: a Tommy Gun ambush at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre – featuring mobsters literally blasting their way through the screen – was thought too insensitive to keep in the wake of last July’s Colorado multiplex massacre. “Everyone was aware what a tragedy had occurred and felt a responsibility to do something different,” says Fleischer, who reunited the cast for a new set-piece in LA’s

historic Chinatown. “We had a very limited time to shoot it but everybody rose to the occasion.” The same can be said of Penn, so stepping into his role as former boxer Cohen he willingly signed up for hours in the make-up chair. (“The prosthetics were his idea,” says Ruben of the faux broken nose and damaged cartilage adorning Mickey’s brutalised visage.)

“Sean and I dance a good dance,” smiles Brolin, perhaps still nursing bruises from the physical confrontation he has with his old *Milk* mucker near the end of the film. The pain was more than worth it, though – especially if it meant he could pay tribute to his birthplace in the process. “I have six generations from California so this is something that praises my home-town and looks at its history,” the erstwhile Man in Black says. “It’s a real gangbusters film, so it was fun...” **NS**



ETA | 11 JANUARY *Gangster Squad* opens this winter. For more news check out totalfilm.com

'Part of the ambition was to pay tribute to an amazing history and tradition'

RUBEN FLEISCHER



Gangland Style: (Main) Ryan Gosling and Josh Brolin on set, and (below) Emma Stone and Sean Penn complete the ensemble cast.



RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT

What's stopping, what's starting in movieland...



● Johnny Depp and Christoph Waltz are already linked to Wally Pfister's directorial debut, *Transcendence*. Now, the longtime Nolan lenser has his eyes on Christian Bale for the third lead in his sci-fi drama.

● Matthew Vaughn has dropped out of the *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*. Instead, *X-Men* and *X2* mastermind Bryan Singer will oversee returning super-stars Michael Fassbender, Jennifer Lawrence and James McAvoy.



● Daniel Craig will star alongside Cate Blanchett, and Bill Murray in George Clooney's *Monuments Men* – the story of the art experts hired to redeeming Europe's stolen art during WW2.

● Ryan Gosling has left Nicolas Winding Refn's remake of *Logan's Run* due to a rumoured schedule clash with his own directorial debut, *How To Catch A Monster*.

● Conan reboots! Arnold Schwarzenegger and Universal are reuniting to bring the barbarian back. Again. *The Legend Of Conan* will ignore last year's reboot, with producer Jason Morgan urging us to "think of this as Conan's *Unforgiven*." **BR**

Ever met Tom Cruise?



Movie insights and a bit of star gossip from the folks behind the scenes.

Have you ever met Tom Cruise?

I worked on the first *Mission: Impossible* but I never met him.

What has been your proudest moment?

Sculpting Darth Vader's mask for *Star Wars*. He has become the most iconic villain in cinematic history.



Name Brian Muir
Job Film sculptor
What's that then?

He carves props, costumes and intricate details on film sets.

Filmography
Star Wars, Alien, The Princess Bride, Superman, Indiana Jones, Sleepy Hollow, Snow White & The Huntsman, Harry Potter, Thor: The Dark World, Skyfall

Tell us about your work on *Indy*...

I did the heart that's ripped from a human sacrifice in *Temple of Doom*. I also sculpted the cobra *Indy* comes face to face with in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.



That was a fake cobra?!

A real cobra was used facing *Indy* but the cobra seen rearing up from the back is my sculpt made from clay, cast in rubber.

And you've worked your magic on *Bond*, too?

I made the *Die Another Day* ice bar, and on *Skyfall* I made six 5ft-high Chinese lions.

How was it working on *Thor 2*?

I was involved in the architectural detailing for the walls, doors and floors in the [Asgardian] throne room, among other sets. It was very enjoyable! **OP**

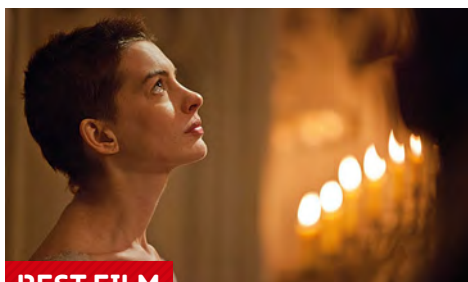


ETA | 8 NOVEMBER 2013
Thor: The Dark World opens next year. To see more of Brian's movie work visit brianmuirvadersculptor.com

PREDICTIONS!

Oscar watch 2013

It's nearly that time again... Buzz picks the ones to watch at the 85th Academy Awards.



BEST FILM

Epic in scale, intimate in scope, based on a bestseller... Ang Lee's **LIFE OF PI** is surely a frontrunner to take home the Best Picture title at the 2013 awards. It's got some stiff competition, mind: Ben Affleck's **ARGO** has charmed potential voters with its masterful blending of suspense and industry satire, while Paul Thomas Anderson's **THE MASTER** and Kathryn Bigelow's **ZERO DARK THIRTY** are aiming big despite potentially controversial subjects (Scientology, Osama Bin Laden). And everyone knows Oscar loves a musical (*The Sound Of Music*, *Oliver!*, *Chicago*...) – if Tom Hooper's **LES MISERABLES** delivers on its classy credentials, we could be in for a clean sweep.



BEST DIRECTOR

After missing out on nods for *Gone Baby Gone* and *The Town*, **BEN AFFLECK** is in prime position to pick one up this time around: *Argo* has proved a huge hit with audiences, critics and, crucially, his Hollywood peers. He should be in good company – heavyweights and previous winners **STEVEN SPIELBERG** (*Lincoln*), **PETER JACKSON** (*The Hobbit*), **KATHRYN BIGELOW** (*Zero Dark Thirty*) and **ROBERT ZEMECKIS** (*Flight*) will all be hoping for another shot at gold, while epic 'southern' *Django Unchained* could give **QUENTIN TARANTINO** his best chance yet at winning his first directing trophy. He does have his old friends the Weinsteins campaigning on his behalf, after all...

BEST LEAD

Silver Linings Playbook's **JENNIFER LAWRENCE** seems to be the current favourite to take home the Best Actress trophy, her performance as a sour young widow widely regarded as the ace up the sleeve of David O Russell's comedy drama. Expect nods for **HELEN MIRREN** (*Hitchcock*), **HELEN HUNT** (*The Sessions*) and **MARION COTILLARD** (*Rust And Bone*), too. And then there's **QUVENZHANÉ WALLIS**' incredible turn as the tiny heroine of apocalyptic indie *Beasts Of The Southern Wild*. At nine years old, she'd be the youngest actress ever to be nominated in this category – but hey, this is Hollywood, and far stranger things have happened.

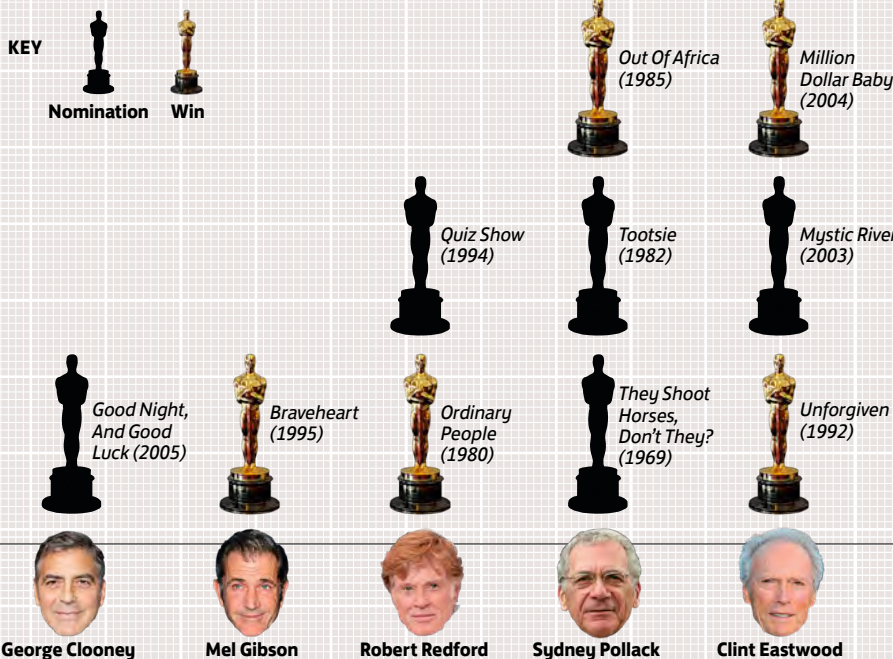


In contrast, 75-year-old **ANTHONY HOPKINS** would be one of the oldest thespians up for the Best Actor award – his role as master of suspense Alfred Hitchcock looks set to land him his fourth nomination for a lead (after winning in 1992 for *The Silence Of The Lambs*). Don't rule out **DENZEL WASHINGTON** (playing an alcoholic pilot in *Flight*) or **DANIEL DAY-LEWIS** (getting plaudits as slave abolishing Pres Abe Lincoln in Steven Spielberg's biopic), either. Our money's on a guaranteed nomination for **JOHN HAWKES** – moving up to leading man (he was nominated for Supporting Actor in 2011 for *Winter's Bone*) as a disabled polio survivor in sex-com *The Sessions*.

Hopkins' Hitchcock could win big.

Switching sides

Will Ben Affleck finally join this elite club of Hollywood actors turned Oscar-worthy directors?



27 movies
\$8.9bn
 worldwide box office

Directing
 Oscars won

2
 out of 6
 nominations

Film with
 most Oscars

7
Schindler's List

Last win

1999
Saving Private Ryan



movies **10**
\$3.6bn
 worldwide box office

Directing
 Oscars won

1
 out of 2
 nominations

Film with
 most Oscars

11
*The Lord Of The
 Rings: The Return
 Of The King*

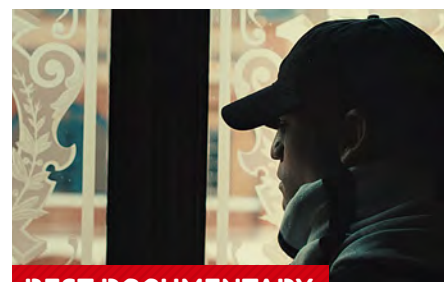
Last win

2004
*The Lord Of The Rings:
 The Return Of The King*



BEST ANIMATION

Since its inception back in 2001, the Best Animated Feature category has pretty much been dominated by Pixar (boasting six wins to date), but the underwhelming Highlands adventure **BRAVE** will have some way to go to beat Tim Burton's wonderfully weird, stop-motion horror homage **FRANKENWEENIE**, LAIKA's zombie infested **PARANORMAN** or Disney's own **WRECK-IT RALPH** – looking sure to do for videogame characters what *Toy Story* did for, erm, toys.



BEST DOCUMENTARY

2012 has been a great year for the big-screen doc, so there's plenty for the Academy to choose from. Bart Layton's **THE IMPOSTER** pushed genre boundaries with its noirish, suspense-filled tale of stolen identity, and Malik Bendjelloul's **SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN** proved that, even in the world of rock 'n' roll, truth really is stranger than fiction. Expect a nod too for **MARLEY** – Kevin MacDonald's exhaustive, insightful and moving biography of reggae superstar Bob. MacDonald won back in 2000 for *One Day In September* – could this nab him Oscar No 2? **RJ**

Spielberg vs Jackson

Sizing up the Oscar credentials of the Lincoln and Hobbit directors...

BEST SUPPORT

The Master's **AMY ADAMS** has already been nominated three times in the Best Supporting Actress category and never won – this *has* to be her year, doesn't it? Among those hoping to wrangle it away from her will be *Hitchcock*'s **SCARLETT JOHANSSON** and *Django*'s **KERRY WASHINGTON**... **JUDI DENCH** could be in with a shout, too – her final outing as M left *Skyfall* packing a surprisingly emotional punch.

Javier Bardem crazies up in *Skyfall*.

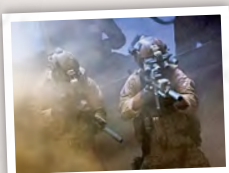
Talking of 007's latest adventure, **JAVIER BARDEM**'s menacingly flamboyant turn as rogue agent Silva is sure to bag him a nomination for Best Supporting Actor (he won in 2008 for *No Country For Old Men*, in which he played a ruthless killer with an equally silly haircut). He'll likely be joined by his *No Country* co-star **TOMMY LEE JONES**, impressive as an outspoken congressman in *Lincoln*, and **ROBERT DE NIRO**, dare we say back on form in *Silver Linings Playbook*. We could even see **IAN MCKELLEN** honoured for his return as Gandalf (after being nommed in 2002 for *The Fellowship Of The Ring*).

Kathryn Bigelow's winning formula

How *Zero Dark Thirty* is hoping to repeat *The Hurt Locker*'s success...



INSPIRED BY
 REAL EVENTS



GRITTY MODERN
 WARFARE



SOLDIERS'EYE
 VIEW



GRANDIOSE
 POLITICAL STATEMENTS





Striking back:
Star Wars gets a
new lease of life.

FIRST WORD!

A new hope?

What Disney's purchase of Lucasfilm means for movies...

POWER HOUSE

In a deal worth a whopping \$4.05bn, Disney now not only owns the operation at the heart of George Lucas' *Star Wars* empire, Lucasfilm, but also special effects house Industrial Light & Magic, Skywalker Sound and games division LucasArts.

MORE WARS

A new *Star Wars* trilogy is already in the works: *Star Wars: Episode VII* slated for release in 2015, with Kathleen Kennedy executive producing and Lucas in a creative consultant role. Lucas has written story treatments for the trilogy, as well as for a number of other *Star Wars* movies.

PRESIDENT KENNEDY

Kennedy – the producer of *E.T.* and *Jurassic Park* who co-founded Amblin with Steven Spielberg in 1981 – will now take up the position of president at Lucasfilm. She has already begun work on *Episode VII*, and is plotting the movie with a writing team.

THE EMPIRE EXPANDS

Disney's purchase of Lucasfilm is the latest in a spending spree that saw the company buy Pixar in 2006 and Marvel in 2009, although compared to the prices Disney paid for those two (\$7.4bn and \$4.2bn respectively), Lucasfilm is a relative bargain.

WHAT THE JONES?

Star Wars isn't the only franchise that Disney has acquired with this deal – *Indiana Jones* is now under their control as well. **RP**

ETA | 2015 *Star Wars: Episode VII* is currently in development.



Film quotes pose as questions. Film stars try to cope. In the crosshairs this month:
Toby Jones

Are you talkin' to me?

Often when one is acting in a regular film, it's pretty straightforward that another actor is talking to you. However, there are some movies being made with CGI, where it's not always clear who one's talking to. Often you'll be talking to a tennis ball.

Do you feel lucky punk?

It's funny to be referred to as a punk since that's all I ever wanted to be. At 11, just about everything I listened to was punk. But I lived in the countryside, so the opportunities were limited.

You talk the talk, do you walk the walk?

Walking the walk is a very good way of learning to talk the talk. When you're studying a character like Hitchcock, often the way that person walks may be in counterpoint to the way that they talk.

You either surf or you fight...

This is on my mind as I've just been offered a part in a Mafia film. I've never actually been involved in a physical fight, so I'll have to do some research by talking to people who have experience of fighting.

What's the last thing you do remember?

I'm one of those actors who can wipe my memory; it deletes everything once I've done a scene. There are



actors that remember their lines, but I think they're in the minority.

What's your favourite scary movie?

Jaws is a masterpiece. It's fear within, a realist film. Then there are films like *Don't Look Now*. It's eerily scary and makes you anxious and

'People who don't know me approach me as if I'm strange'

you're not sure why. I tried to watch *Psycho* while I was away in South Africa filming. I thought, 'This should be a piece of cake.' Alone in my hotel room in bright sunlight I managed to terrify myself. But if I had to pick a favourite scary movie it would be *Rosemary's Baby*.

I know you can be overwhelmed, and I know you can be underwhelmed, but can you ever just be whelmed?

Acting is often a euphoric activity. Part of the way one tries to deal with those highs and lows is to stay in a state of 'whelm', because sometimes the euphoria can be overwhelming and the climax makes it underwhelming as well. One's always working on the whelm. Stay in whelm.

Who says I'm strange?

Several people think I'm strange. People who don't know me often approach me as if I am. It might be something to do with some of the parts I've played. I gave a gift when we finished shooting *Infamous* of that phrase engraved on a set of glasses to all the people in the film. 'Who says I'm strange?' **JW**

ETA | 7 JANUARY *The Girl* airs on BBC Two in December and is available on DVD this January.



The master: as Alfred Hitchcock in BBC's *The Girl*, with Sienna Miller as Tippi Hedren.

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Christmas horror:
filming of *The Oranges*.

EXCLUSIVE!

Family affair

THE ORANGES | Sex, booze and scandal. Welcome to Christmas in suburbia.

➤ Christmas. A time for families to eat, drink and... er, argue. In comedy *The Oranges*, Hugh Laurie's affair with the daughter of his best friend causes a right old ruckus. Brit director Julian Farino talks us through the yuletide from hell.

THE SCRIPT

"I loved the script from the very beginning. It was number two on 2008's Blacklist [*Hollywood's annual chart of the best unproduced screenplays of the year*] – number one was *The Beaver*. I liked the fact that it was non-judgemental; it's about forgiveness and the fact that we all make mistakes."

THE APPROACH

"I wasn't scandalised when I read it, but the concept is still quite a big deal for America to manage. So when I was setting out to make the movie I was like, 'OK, it's got a sort of dark premise but it's a comedy.' This wasn't an in-depth character study; it doesn't go to the dark places."

THE CASTING

"The key bit of casting I was struggling with was Hugh's character, because I didn't want it to look like a mid-life crisis that was sexually-based. I had kind of hung my hat on Hugh because he has that inner decency, he's not predatory and that was necessary to the story."

THE SHOOT

"It was tough: we had 29 days and the budget was \$7m. Even though it's not a big action movie, that's super tight. We didn't have trailers or anything; we put all the cast in a house and we all mucked in together. It was just trying to capture that energy that you need on an independent movie."

THE RESULT

"I finished the movie the morning before the premiere [at the Toronto Film Festival] and it had been quite a scrap to get it done... It had been a tough, tense time. Then I was in a 950-seat cinema and it was packed and I was like, 'Wow, after all that stress... it's just simple, it's human laughter.' That feeling was fantastic." RJ

ETA | 7 DECEMBER *The Oranges* opens this winter and is reviewed on page 61. For more news check out totalfilm.com

Call
me



Too busy to meet up? Luckily we've got your number... Not screening her calls properly, **Mary Elizabeth Winstead**

What are you up to today?

I'm at my house in LA, just doing some reading and taking it easy.

You've been praised for your performance as an alcoholic in *Smashed*. Did you know it would be a good role for you from the start?

I didn't think of it so much as a great career move, but I knew that it was what I needed to do. I just was feeling really scared of not becoming a better actor and of getting stuck.

Did you feel that you could bring something in particular to the role?

In this business you get told by a lot of people what your limitations are. I'm always the girl next door, the good girl,

and anytime I was up for something different, people would tell me it just wasn't believable. So when I read the script I loved it, but I didn't really believe anybody would see me in the part.

Addiction movies have a reputation for being very depressing, but *Smashed* really isn't...

That was actually one of the scarier parts of doing the film, but sometimes the most horrible, awkward situation is hilarious if you just play the truth of it, and that's what we focused on.

Is it hard to play drunk? Do you have to spin around on the spot a lot?

I actually did, yeah. The spinning helped a lot, but the main technique I used is like a hypnosis. You close your eyes and take yourself through the steps of drinking, to the point that when you open your eyes, you feel it in your body.

You must be a very cheap date, now.

I know, right?

And next you've got *A Good Day To Die Hard*...

It's definitely a cameo, but it was so much fun to hang out with Bruce again and to be a McClane. Just getting to be part of that family tree was incredible. EEJ

ETA | 14 DECEMBER *Smashed* opens this winter. For more news check out totalfilm.com



NEW FILMS!

**'Sometimes the
most horrible,
awkward situation
is hilarious'**



Face off: Gary Oldman and a hairless Harrison Ford in *Paranoia*.

FIRST LOOK!

Grudge match

➤ “Get off my plane!” growled Harrison Ford’s President to Gary Oldman’s terrorist in *Air Force One*, shortly before chucking him out of a cargo hold mid-flight. Fifteen years later and the two heavyweights are teaming up again – and this time the circumstances aren’t much friendlier... Based on Joseph Finder’s 2004 bestseller, **PARANOIA** sees Liam Hemsworth stuck in the middle – playing an employee of a multinational who’s blackmailed by his ruthless CEO (Oldman) into spying on the competition (Ford), becoming a pawn in a corporate game.

Directed by 21’s Robert Luketic, the Philadelphia-set thriller boasts support from Amber Heard, Josh Holloway and Richard Dreyfuss – but it’s the prospect of another bust-up between Oldman and Ford that’s whetting our appetite... “There’s a real contest of wills,” teases the latter. Get ready for round two... **NS**

ETA | 2013 *Paranoia* opens next year. For more news check out totalfilm.com



TF saves you a night out every month. This issue, **Skyfall** gets cut down...

FADE IN
EXT. ISTANBUL
DANIEL CRAIG smashes up a quaint Turkish market during a motorbike chase with **OLA RAPACE**.

JUDI DENCH
You must retrieve my stolen hard drive, 007. Let’s just say it has... compromising information on it.

DANIEL CRAIG
Jesus. Even I wouldn’t look at that. BRB, I’ve got a train to catch.

DANIEL and **OLA** fight on a train roof, because the Istanbul chase was too similar to the one in **TAKEN 2**.

NAOMIE HARRIS
I’ve got visuals on Bond, ma’am, but the title sequence is fast approaching. Should I take the shot?

JUDI DENCH
We’ve seen what happens when you cut Adele’s time short. Do it!

NAOMIE HARRIS shoots Bond, who falls into a river and dies, until he turns up alive in London after the credits.

JUDI DENCH
Good to have you back 007, it was touch and go for three minutes there. MI6 is under attack. We tracked the hackers to Pinewood’s Shanghai set.

DANIEL CRAIG
Hackers? I’m too old for this shit. It’s de rigeur to acknowledge your age in action



SPOILER ALERT!

movies now. Also I haven’t had sex in eight minutes.

BÉRÉNICE MARLOHE
Fancy flirting awkwardly before a quick shag in the shower? I’ll be killed afterwards so, no strings.

BÉRÉNICE MARLOHE takes **DANIEL** to the film’s villain, then dies.

JAVIER BARDEM
Ah, meester Bon. Danju for coming to my faboolus secret lair. My plan ees to keel that ol’ queen ju call M. What a beetch! [pouts]

DANIEL CRAIG
A gay villain? He’s exploiting my one weakness: my throbbing machismo.

DANIEL takes **JAVIER** back to London to MI6’s new underground HQ, but he hacks himself free with hacking.

BEN WHISHAW
We’ll need to hack him back. This is the most sophisticated code I’ve ever seen! And I’m clearly a geek!

DANIEL CRAIG
Wait... those tiny letters on the screen spell the name of a disused tube station. That’s where he’s headed!

BEN WHISHAW [shakes head] The most sophisticated code I’ve ever seen.

JAVIER blows a hole in the underground to

explode an empty tube train at **DANIEL**, because movie hacking is boring to watch.

JAVIER BARDEM
Mind the gap!

DANIEL CRAIG
He’s headed for M’s deposition in Westminster. I’ll get there in time by running, despite the massive train crash I was just in.

RALPH FIENNES
She’s safe, Bond, but you’ll need to whisk her away to your Scottish family home for an emotional showdown.

JAVIER BARDEM
Ooh, does thees mean I can wear a keelt?

INT. SKYFALL LODGE
DANIEL and **JUDI** prepare for **JAVIER**’s arrival.

DANIEL CRAIG
That’s right. We’re Home Alone-ing him. Get my tar and feathers.

JAVIER BARDEM
Too late, meester Bon! I have the stoopid lady and I weel keel her!

DANIEL stabs **JAVIER** in the back, saving **JUDI**, who dies six seconds later anyway, making the last two hours pointless.

DANIEL CRAIG
Sadface. Did we ever retrieve that important hard drive? Oh well. At least this was better than Quantum Of Suckage.

END



BUZZ How did you bond with the other *Seven Psychopaths* on set? **SAM ROCKWELL** We were all so silly. We put beards on people...

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CITIZEN ZANE

Alex takes on Hollywood. This month: a night at the flicks...

➤ Last weekend I went to the cinema on a Saturday night (for the first time in about two years) to see *Madagascar 3* (It's all about the penguins). Normally I'm lucky enough to attend press screenings, which are very civilised and occasionally there are biscuits. But what I witnessed is how I imagine the streets of a major city might look after it has been announced that a meteor would destroy the planet in 24 hours – it was carnage. Do people have no respect for the sanctity of the cinema anymore?

Alright, perhaps 'carnage' is a bit strong if the worst thing that happens in the run up to our obliteration by a big rock is that packs of oily teenagers run amok throwing popcorn at each other. At least then I'll be able to stay home and watch 2002's *The Master of Disguise* in peace. That's what I'll be doing on the eve of our extinction. I figure by the end credits, the death of our species will seem like a rather good idea. If you've not seen *The Master of Disguise* this should give you an idea of the quality of the film: the name of the main character is Pistachio Diguio.

But good news life fans, there's no world-killing asteroid due until 2182 apparently, by which point there will probably be no cinema and we'll be experiencing our movies in the form of a pill. If, half way through, you decide you don't



'Fear not, for I have a solution to restore order to our multiplexes'

like it, you induce vomiting, which as it happens is not a bad way to silence a greasy teen intent on ruining your movie-watching by chucking snack food about. Nothing stops them in their tracks quite like you throwing up into their face, apologising and then pulling out a used tissue and awkwardly dabbing their cheeks, while mumbling incoherently about being "bitten by that monkey"...

But anyway, back to Saturday, and aside from the rampaging, popcorn-hurling spawn there

was a man, with his girlfriend, in the cinema, on his laptop. I repeat, on his laptop. And I think, although this could have been a rage induced hallucination, he was playing *Civilization*.

Girl: Hey, you promised to take me to the movies tonight.

Blake: But I've nearly finished building the Hanging Gardens which will increase food production in my capital city.

Girl: Duh, but look at what you're playing it on stupid, it's your LAPTOP.

Blake: [Laughs] I'm an idiot, of course, I can TAKE IT WITH ME!

Fear not however, I have a solution to restore order to our multiplexes. Everyone in the cinema has a computerised map of the auditorium with all the seats marked on it. If a person is disrupting the film you click their seat on the map. Once enough people have clicked on their seat, that person is sucked out of the room through a hole in the floor, down into a huge threshing machine, before their liquid remains are then pumped back into the nacho cheese dispenser. No part of them is wasted, and nacho cheese finally has some nutritional value. This scheme is ready to be piloted around the UK.

Agree or disagree with Alex's take on cinema-going? Tweet at us with your thoughts: @totalfilm

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9 details for the sharper movie fan...

agenda

EDITED BY RICHARD JORDAN

- 1 | Gosling's back!
- 2 | The new *Pan's Labyrinth*
- 3 | Time travel with a twist
- 4 | Aubrey Plaza brings the funny
- 5 | Kit Harington gets scary
- 6 | A-listers go digital
- 7 | Classic scene: *Taxi Driver*
- 8 | David Cronenberg is a hero
- 9 | RA gets some feedback

1

The Returning Hero

Ryan Gosling's world domination bid, take 2.

The year of the Gosling was 2011. Proving his indie credentials in *Blue Valentine*, his comedy chops in *Crazy Stupid Love*, his political muscles in *The Ides Of March* and his hammer skills in *Drive*, his face filled every screen, poster and bus shelter you could see. Absent from all for over a year now, he's finally ready for his big comeback.

First up is *Gangster Squad*, Ruben Fleischer's '40s set cops and robbers flick that re-teams Gosling with *CSL* co-star Emma Stone. Billed as a modern take on the mob movie tradition by the *Zombieland* director, expect guns, girls and more of Gosling's now trademark ultra-violence.

After he's done busting crooks he'll be switching sides as a bike-riding bank robber in *The Place Beyond The Pines*, before starring in Nicholas Winding Refn's Bangkok set revenge *Only God Forgives*.

And that's all before working on Terrence Malick's untitled Texas music-scene project and directing his own movie (rumoured to be an S&M fantasy with Christina Hendricks). Looks like he'll need to spend 2014 putting his feet up again... **PB**

ETA 2013 *Gangster Squad* opens on 11 January, *The Place Beyond The Pines* opens in March, *Only God Forgives* and the untitled Terrence Malick project open later in 2013. For more news, go to totalfilm.com

agenda



Historical horror: Tómas Lemarquis in *Painless*.

2

The Horror Hopeful

A bold new talent.

No pain, no gain

Nobody was more surprised than Spanish writer/director Juan Carlos Medina when the LFF screening of his debut, **PAINLESS**, ended with a job offer from Hammer CEO Simon Oakes.

Co-written with Luiso Berdejo (*[REC]*), *Painless* is a striking work telling the (Pan's) labyrinthine story of a group of children incapable of feeling pain, who are co-opted into the fascist regime during the Spanish Civil War. Medina feels their plight: his great-grandparents were executed during the war then buried "in a mass grave", and the film's fantasy-horror elements allow him "to tell this story in a visceral way". Its most memorable creation is torturer Berkano (Tómas Lemarquis), who Medina describes as a "Frankenstein's monster shaped by history." No wonder Hammer took note. **MG**

ETA | 2013 *Painless* will be released next year. For more news check out totalfilm.com



Back in time: Kenneth (Mark Duplass).

3

The Concept Comedy

Adventures in time travel.

Time warped

SAFETY NOT GUARANTEED | Move over Marty McFly, indie cinema is going back to the future – with a twist...

I kept thinking, 'How do you root for somebody that's potentially insane and an idiot?' muses Mark Duplass. The self-appointed indie king and director of *Cyrus* and *Baghead* (among others) is referring to Kenneth, his character in sci-fi comedy *Safety Not Guaranteed*. A lonely soul, Kenneth posts an ad in a newspaper. "Wanted: Somebody to go back in time with me," it reads. "This is not a joke."

Inspired by a real classified ad published in *Backwoods Home Magazine* in 1997, *SNG* is the debut feature of director Colin Trevorrow. High concept it may be, but as magazine intern Darius (Aubrey Plaza) befriends Kenneth for an exposé, the film shades in unexpected poignancy. "Kenneth's a tattered version of Marty McFly from *Back To The Future*," explains Duplass. "What's so great is that he's a true fist-pumping believer. Darius gets infected by that energy."

Renowned for her turns in *Scott Pilgrim Vs The World* and TV series *Parks And Recreation*, Plaza (see right) admits she was "scared" about taking on her first lead role. Not least because it was written for her. "That's never happened before," the actress marvels. "When the script was done they gave it to me and I was very flattered, I loved it. I was there from the beginning because I loved the story so much."

Duplass was instrumental in ensuring that story ever got told. While he and brother Jay share a

producing credit on the film ("We're known as producers who are there for you if you want to get the fucker made!"), *SNG* is just one of the many films Duplass has put his name to in the last year... There was micro-budget Emily Blunt chuckler *Your Sister's Sister*, upcoming thriller *Black Rock* (which he wrote for his wife Katie Aselton to direct) and a role in Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*.

"I'm a workaholic, I've gotta work on that," the multi-hyphenate laughs. "And I'm a little bit of a maniac. I spent so many years trying to make something creatively relevant and I struggled. Now I feel like I'm kind of in the zone. It's like I just got to a buffet and I know I can't eat seven entrées, but I've never been offered seven entrées before!"

Still, he's finding time to have fun. "The *Safety Not Guaranteed* shoot was a blast," Duplass exclaims. "Colin was a first-time director but he's a very experienced screenwriter. He's a Spielberg dork, total fuckin' '80s cinema guy. There was this understanding while we were shooting of, 'Colin, go do your cinema magic, if you have to ignore me, I will manage that part of it.' And when everybody's working for 15c you get a camaraderie thing – you can't escape to your trailers because there are no trailers!" **JW**

ETA | 26 DECEMBER *Safety Not Guaranteed* opens on Boxing Day. For more news check out totalfilm.com

4

The Talent

Aubrey Plaza
is happy to
be here.

➤ No one does mardy like Aubrey Plaza. The moody co-star of TV's *Parks And Recreation* rarely smiles (and somehow looks even angrier if she has to). But it looks like her first big-screen lead in time-travel comedy *Safety Not Guaranteed* might see her brighten up. It's the start of an exciting year for the former stand-up...

What was it like travelling through time?

We shot 24 locations in 25 days – I was rolling around in the dirt, running through the wood, shooting guns. Totally crazy, but really fun. I felt like I was in a real *Back To The Future* movie.

What was it like working with Bill Murray in *A Glimpse Inside The Mind Of Charles Swan III*?

He was everything I hoped he was going to be. The smartest, most mysterious, funniest person... ever.

***The To Do List* looks pretty, err, rude...**

I play a girl who makes a list of all the things that she needs to learn how to do with guys – then she goes through it like a homework assignment. I think people are going to love it. It's like *Easy A* with actual sex. **PB**



ETA | 26 DECEMBER *Safety Not Guaranteed* opens on Boxing Day. For more news, go to totalfilm.com



**'The To Do List
is like Easy A,
with actual sex'**

9 details for the *sharper* movie fan...

agenda

5

The Talent

Kit Harington
ups his game.

➤ Dark soulful eyes, a mop of black hair and wise-beyond-his-years delivery – Kit Harington has cornered the market in haunted hotties. Smoldering on the small screen in *Game Of Thrones*, the actor is moving into the movies with *Silent Hill: Revelation 3D*, *The Seventh Son* and *Greenland Time*.

Where is Jon Snow heading in *Game Of Thrones*' third season?

He's going to a very dark place emotionally. But he's got a task to do, friends to save. Poor Jon always has a lot of conflict, but he's got even more this season.


Like *Game Of Thrones*, you encounter monsters in *Silent Hill: Revelation 3D*.

Are you a horror fan?

I've always wanted to do a horror movie. My favourite is *The Shining*, but I also loved *The Ring*, the *Scream* movies and *The Wicker Man* with Christopher Lee. *Silent Hill* has elements of that in it. It's about a town of people who have been shut off from the world and turned weird.

What can you say about your next films?

I just came off *The Seventh Son*, with Jeff Bridges and Julianne Moore. Next year I'm doing *Greenland Time*, a two-hander with Vera Farmiga. We meet and go off to Greenland – thriller stuff ensues! **JMc**

 **ETA | NOW** *Silent Hill: Revelation 3D* is in cinemas now, *The Seventh Son* opens 18 October and *Greenland Time* opens in 2014. For more news, go to totalfilm.com

*'I've always wanted to do a horror movie. My favourite is **The Shining**'*

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6

**Agenda
Investigates**

**Actors in
video games.**

Game changers

A raft of A-list actors are now pouring their craft into consoles. Total Film explores a shifting universe...

Forget *Harry Potter*, Forget *Batman*," chuckles Gary Oldman, "I'm more famous for *Call Of Duty*." This might sound ludicrous – but the Oscar-nominated actor is deadly serious. The military-themed first-person shooter series, for which Oldman voices the Russian field operative Captain Viktor Reznov, has sold over 100 million copies to date. And when Oldman meets his sons' friends, they don't want to talk about Sid Vicious, Dracula or Lee Harvey Oswald. "They come up to me at the school and go 'Are you Reznov?' They think I'm the coolest thing."

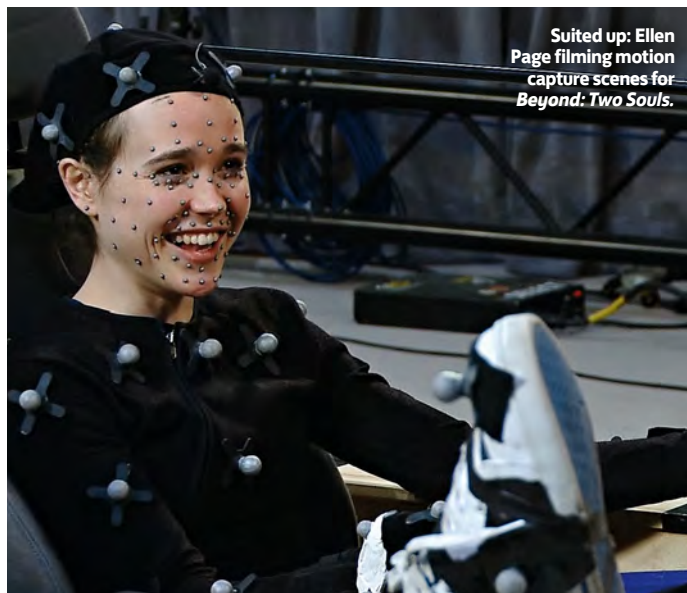
But Oldman isn't alone. In *Call Of Duty: Black Ops*, he was joined by Ed Harris, Sam Worthington and Ice Cube – further proof that

heavyweight actors are taking video games seriously. "Actors – and agents, who are usually even more important in Hollywood – have always been cautious about video games," notes David Cage, head of Quantic Dream, the company behind the acclaimed *Heavy Rain*. "They saw them, in the best case, as a simple way to make some cash; in the worst case, an insignificant and creatively mediocre medium. But in the past years, things started to change."

Partly, Cage attributes this to the enormous revenues generated by such franchise big-hitters as *Call Of Duty* and *Grand Theft Auto*. "Games became a respectable medium from a financial point of view." But money isn't the only reason. "I think it's becoming more of a real job," adds

Jack Black, who has worked on the tie-in game for *King Kong* and the heavy metal-themed *Brütal Legend*. "The industry is so huge, they're seeking out legitimate actors, because they realise that the games are better when they're acted well."

The creators of *Dishonored*, a new first-person stealth game from Arkane Studios, which sees its player enter an alt-Victorian steampunk universe, recruited such voice talents as Chloë Grace Moretz, Lena Headey, Brad Dourif and, in her first video game effort, Susan Sarandon. "I think part of it is social acceptance," says the game's co-creator Harvey Smith. "People now see this as the creative medium of this time period." It helps that some of the actors "are probably gamers themselves at some level", he says.



Suited up: Ellen Page filming motion capture scenes for *Beyond: Two Souls*.

'Brad Dourif burst into tears on his computer'

Studios can call upon third-parties like the LA-based Blindlight to help negotiate with agents, recruit the cast and record the actual dialogue. From an actor's point-of-view, of course, it's not dissimilar to recording voiceover for an animation project – though if you're working on something like *Call Of Duty*, you'd better have your vocal chords in tip-top condition.

"You have to do this thing called 'battle chatter', which is all the variables of what the player can do," says Oldman. "It takes two days and you have about a thousand lines. They're graded from one to five in their intensity. So you get a stream of them that are on level five – and you have to scream, 'Over there! Shoot! On the ridge! Up by the tank!' I remember, Kiefer Sutherland came out of the booth and said, 'Man, I haven't shouted so much since I was married!'"

Yet, as Cage's forthcoming project, the afterlife-themed *Beyond: Two Souls*, shows, actor-involvement is extending way beyond vocal contributions. *Inception* star Ellen Page spent four

weeks in Paris playing the game's lead character Jodie Holmes, not only vocalising the character but physically becoming her using motion-capture technology. "I think she delivered a performance I have never seen in a video game before," says Cage. "She cried, screamed, laughed – she gave flesh and blood to her character in her very unique way."

The biggest challenge is that the game plays out over 15 hours, with multiple choices and story strands for the player to follow, meaning Page had to actualise numerous

different scenarios. "Ellen told me it was like shooting three or four movies at the same time," says Cage, who hopes *Beyond: Two Souls* can help prove that games can carry adult storylines. "I think that the game industry has to grow up," he says. "We cannot make games about zombies, aliens and monsters forever." Only then will the A-list stars truly flock to the video game revolution. **James Mottram**

VIDEO STARS FIVE A-LIST GAMES COMING YOUR WAY



ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES

Sega's first-person shooter promises to take us into the world of the *Alien* franchise, in particular James Cameron's *Aliens*. Lance Henriksen is back, voicing his role as the android Bishop. "I'll live forever now," laughs the actor. "I'm on celluloid and digital!"



BEYOND: TWO SOULS

A groundbreaking fusion of technology and star power, with Ellen Page playing Jodie Holmes across 15 years of her life. "Ellen respected the medium," says game creator David Cage. "She never thought that her performance was [just] good enough for a video game."



GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Ray Liotta, James Woods, Dennis Hopper, Samuel L. Jackson...the *GTA* series has always recruited big, bold Hollywood stars. No word yet on the cast for the much-anticipated *GTA V*. But let's hope it's better than Ricky Gervais, who did stand-up in *GTA IV*...



SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH

Potty-mouthed Stan, Kyle, Cartman and Kenny get their own *Lord Of The Rings* style "epic quest to become cool". Unlike previous attempts at bringing the show to consoles, creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone are heavily involved – which means genuine voices. M'kay?



THE LAST OF US

Joss Whedon favourite Ashley Johnson (she's been in *The Avengers*, *Dollhouse* and his new Shakespeare adap *Much Ado About Nothing*) heads the cast for this mo-cap created post-apocalyptic adventure. Think *The Road* meets *I Am Legend*, on your console. Eek.

Game face: Ellen Page's digital alter-ego Jodie Holmes – star of psychological thriller *Beyond: Two Souls*.

Even Brad Dourif, it seems. The 62 year-old *Lord Of The Rings* star is a massive gamer. "He started talking about what he used to do in *Wing Commander*!" laughs Smith. "He told this story – it was three in the morning and he'd just finished one of the huge missions and the Colonel said 'Good job, son, you saved everybody' and he burst into tears in front of his computer." Even Sarandon has been impressed. "I probably can't play," she tweeted last month, "but I'm proud *DisHonored* is one of the first games you can choose to be clever instead of violent."

With actors recording their dialogue late in the development of a game, it's not always an ideal situation, creatively. Notes Daniel Craig, who has voiced several Bond games including *007: Quantum Of Solace*, "[My involvement is] usually at the end of the [film] shoot, and I can't really commit. I've got a script inside my head and I'm thrown this script, which is something I don't quite understand."

It doesn't help that none of the top Hollywood agencies have yet to employ a full-time games department. Fortunately, companies like Arkane



ETA *DisHonored* is available to buy now. *Beyond: Two Souls* will be released next year.

agenda

7

The Classic Scene

Cleaning up the streets.



Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) surveys the scene of his crimes.

Trigger happy

TAXI DRIVER | Travis Bickle turns pistol-packing avenger...

Someday a real rain will come and wash all this scum off the streets," proclaims whackjob NYC cabbie Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), before electing to do the dirty work himself. Armed to the mohawk with handguns, he mounts an impromptu raid on the grimy building where 12-year-old prostitute Iris (Jodie Foster) turns tricks. He's intending, somehow, to save her, but ugly, lumbering violence is the only exit strategy he has to offer. Taking down piratical pimp Sport (Harvey Keitel) and two of his associates while taking hits to the neck and shoulder, Travis attacks indiscriminately – shooting one man's fingers off, then getting the other in the face, as the walls run red with blood. When the madness ends and the smoke clears, Travis (who can't even manage to kill himself) is cast as an avenging angel in the press. But Iris isn't so much saved as spared, and his dripping trigger finger and haunted grin, preserved on student posters the world over, remind us that the storm's not over. **MG**

Taxi Driver is available on DVD and Blu-ray.

Setting the scene

- Screenwriter Paul Schrader based Travis on himself. At the time he was lonely, broke and paranoid, sleeping in his car and frequenting porn cinemas. When he developed an ulcer he realised the nurse was the first person he'd spoken to in weeks.
- Dustin Hoffman and Jeff Bridges were considered ahead of De Niro, while Melanie Griffith and Linda Blair both declined Foster's role. Harvey Keitel was offered Albert Brooks' part, but preferred to play the pimp.
- De Niro commuted from Rome where he was shooting Bertolucci's *1900*. In his spare time, he got a taxi-cab licence and picked up real fares.

TALK TO THE HAND

Make-up artist Dick Smith made a false hand out of rubber, with blood tubes, squibs and removable wax fingers to blow off on cue.



"Whenever I see that scene I never see the violence, I only see the technique that went behind it."

Jodie Foster, actor



DEMOLITION MEN

The filmmakers took over a condemned building on 89th Street and Columbus Avenue for the shoot. The scenes in Travis's apartment were filmed there too.

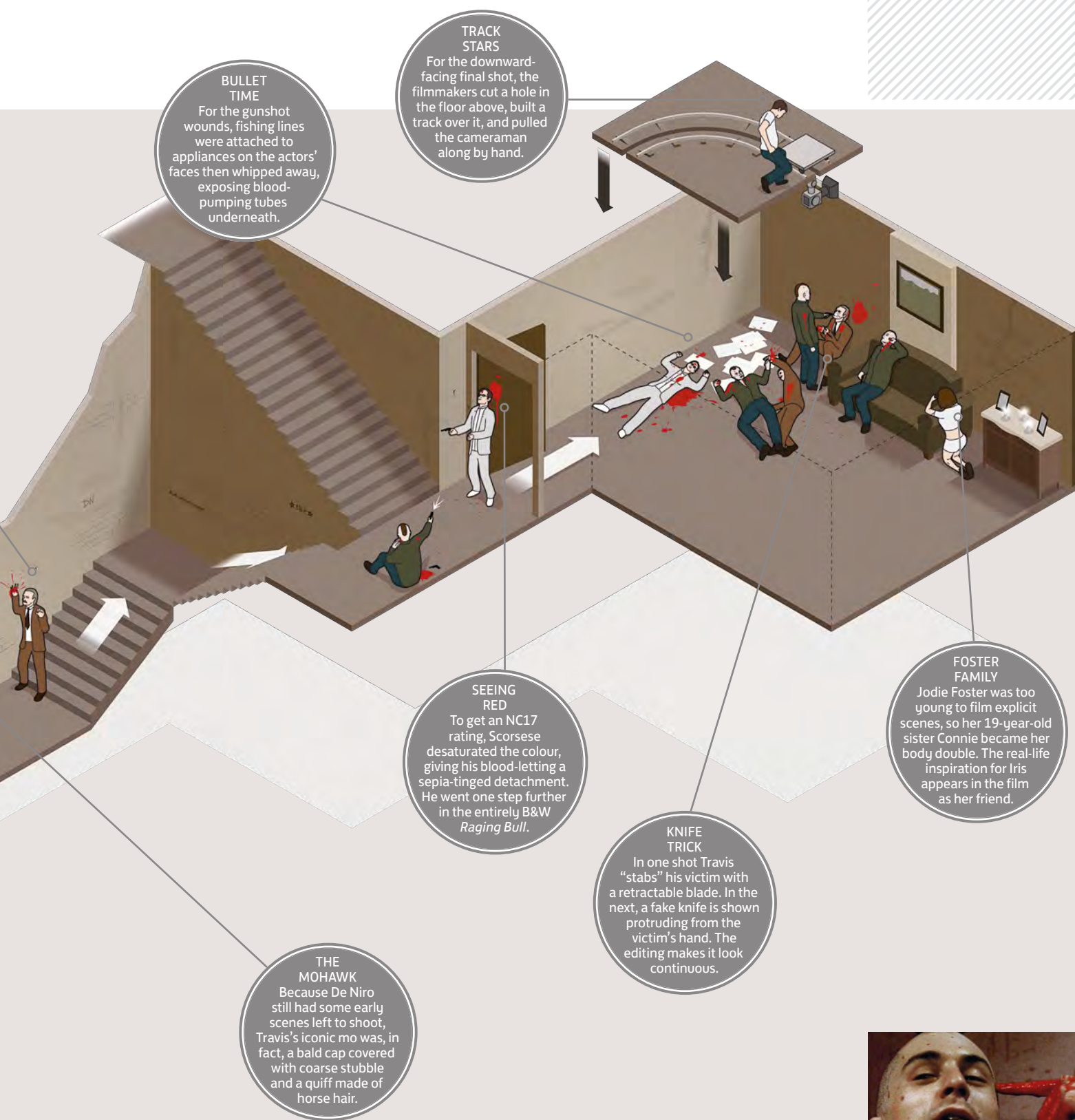


"The gore was very, very intended. In the script it actually describes sheets of blood running down the walls like an expressionistic painting."

Paul Schrader, writer



"It was very tense, we only had 20 minutes to shoot it because of the child labour laws, but we did it in two or three takes." Martin Scorsese, director



BULLET TIME
For the gunshot wounds, fishing lines were attached to appliances on the actors' faces then whipped away, exposing blood-pumping tubes underneath.

TRACK STARS
For the downward-facing final shot, the filmmakers cut a hole in the floor above, built a track over it, and pulled the cameraman along by hand.

SEEING RED
To get an NC17 rating, Scorsese desaturated the colour, giving his blood-letting a sepia-tinged detachment. He went one step further in the entirely B&W *Raging Bull*.

KNIFE TRICK
In one shot Travis "stabs" his victim with a retractable blade. In the next, a fake knife is shown protruding from the victim's hand. The editing makes it look continuous.

FOSTER FAMILY
Jodie Foster was too young to film explicit scenes, so her 19-year-old sister Connie became her body double. The real-life inspiration for Iris appears in the film as her friend.

THE MOHAWK
Because De Niro still had some early scenes left to shoot, Travis's iconic mo was, in fact, a bald cap covered with coarse stubble and a quiff made of horse hair.

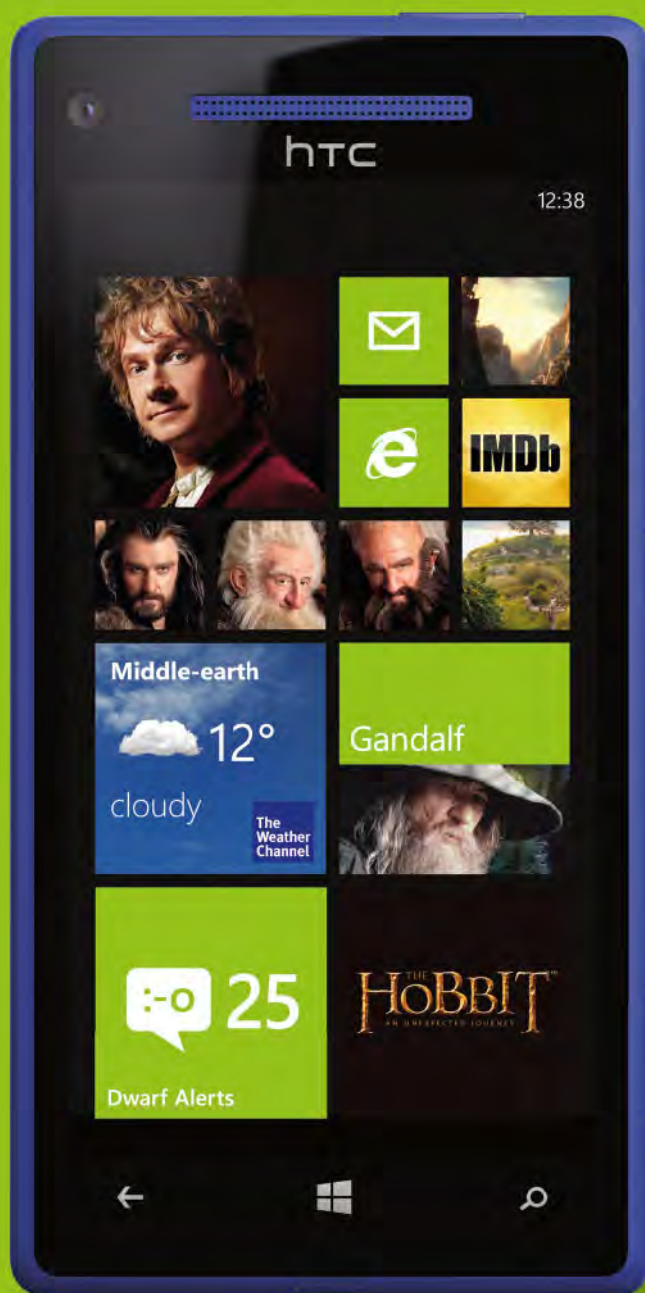


"As you go up it just gets bloodier and bloodier. So every day we'd walk in to see more intense red on the walls, streaks everywhere. It was like going into an abattoir." **Michael Chapman, cinematographer**



"After lots of studio fights, I said, 'What if I tone the colour down?' It gave it a tabloid feel. Maybe more of the film should have looked like that." **Martin Scorsese, director**

Meet Bilbo, reluctant adventurer.

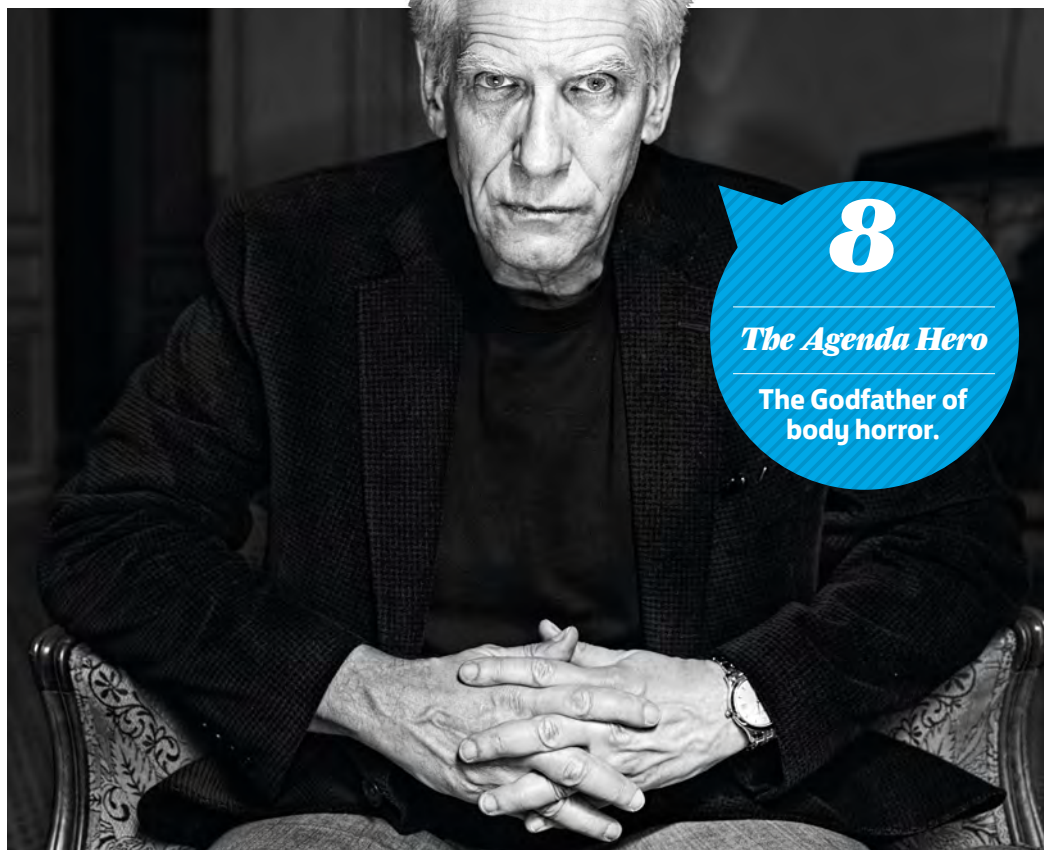


The Hobbit:
An Unexpected Journey,
in cinemas 13 December.

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8

The Agenda Hero

The Godfather of body horror.

David Cronenberg

The Canadian auteur on R-Pattz, Oscars and that pesky Fly.

The body horror maestro is a little more respectable these days, gaining critical kudos for such recent arthouse dramas as *A Dangerous Method* and Don DeLillo adaption *Cosmopolis*. With slimy classics like *Scanners*, *Videodrome* and *The Fly* on his resumé however, it's not surprising that the softly-spoken Canuck will always be associated with the gorily transgressive...

Were you happy with how *Cosmopolis* was received?

No, I would've liked it to have made half a billion dollars at the box office! [laughs] The movie was received like an art film, which is to say it did OK in the big cities. Naturally you always want the biggest audience you can

get, just as long as it doesn't cause you to compromise your moviemaking.

Why did you cast Robert Pattinson as limo-riding antihero Eric Packer?

Eric is in absolutely every scene, so you need an actor who is interesting and charismatic enough to look at for the entire movie. You want someone who can really come up with surprises and angles, and has a level of stardom that will support the movie. He also had to do a credible New York accent. All of that led me to Rob.

***Cosmopolis* screened at Cannes, as did your son Brandon's debut film *Antiviral*. What did you make of it?**

I love *Antiviral*! It was really very

A pint of Cronenberg: (from top) *Cosmopolis* (2012); *Scanners* (1981); *The Fly* (1986).



If I were to do a genre film again, it would have to be something new'

delicious for me to see my son going up his own red carpet and doing his own photo-call in Cannes. I told him, "It took me 20 years to get to Cannes officially, and there you are, with your first film, in the official selection!" It was the first time a father and son had their films in the official selection, so it was pretty exciting.

Why have you chosen to leave horror and move into drama?

I don't really think I've left anything. But it's true that if I were to do a genre film again, in horror or sci-fi, it would really have to be something new and different and not what I had done before. It seems my influence has been strong, and I often get scripts that feel like rewrites of my own movies. But I can't say I would never do a sci-fi or horror again.

What's happening with the proposed remake of *The Fly*?

It started off with Fox wanting to do a remake. I said there was really no point in that for me, but I did propose something to them. They were interested, I wrote a script, and they were not so enthusiastic about it; it was a radical re-thinking, maybe too radical given the budget it would have required. So it kind of died there.

After more than 40 years in the business, what are you most proud of?

I think longevity and consistency in a career is very difficult to do. It's having a body of work that people can see the interconnections with and the evolution of. We all know of filmmakers who made a film that caught the imagination and then just disappeared from view. I do observe constancy as an important part of my filmmaking.

How do you feel about awards? Would you like to win an Oscar?

I'm in the Legion of Honour in France and the Order of Canada and an honorary member of the BFI. These things make you feel part of the international film community, and that you have some respect and acknowledgement. To me, Oscars and Baftas are sales tools: a way for a film to be recognised and maybe get a few more people to see it. You can't get yourself twisted in a knot about such things. **NS**



ETA | OUT NOW *Cosmopolis* is available on DVD and Blu-ray.

agenda

The Furious Quandaries Of Richard Ayoade

Our columnist receives some script feedback from his leading man.



Just finished your script. Sorry for the delay, but I couldn't read more than two pages at a time without becoming incredibly fatigued. It seemed remarkably similar to draft 30 or am I imagining this because of the crippling depression I now feel?

Have you cut the scene where Tony teaches the raccoon to hang glide? A shame as that was one of the few moments I believed. The beginning still feels like an eternity, but perhaps that's what you want? Do you want the audience to be so bored they're grateful that *anything* happens? That could be interesting, but at the moment it's unclear. I'm still not sure whether this is a brave script or a terrible script. This may become more obvious when (if?) you shoot it. BTW is it true that you're not really involved in the actual making of the film? That you just sit in a corner and rock back and forth? If not, and you are more of a presence on set, perhaps you could triangulate any questions via my acting trainer. He's amazing. He trains me AND acts. He also designs my celery cleanses. You should get into them, except they're secret so you can't. God I'm hungry.

So, let's talk about the character. We need one. Unless the idea is that he's *meant* to be a non-person? Like a void or a nothing? Perhaps you'll manage to evoke a believable figure with the editing or the way you light it or something. Look, the point is I've given you my word for some reason so I probably won't back out (although my agent says I totally could back out – why do you think we haven't signed the contracts yet?). Anyway, here are a few thoughts on your latest attempt...



'Is it true that you're not involved in the actual making of the film?'

p.1 It says, "Fade in. We see Tony showering." Who's 'we'? This whole start feels like a conspiracy: "We follow him as he walks to his car"; "We stay with him as he enters the office". Why would 'they' want to watch him so closely? And why wouldn't Tony notice?

p.3 Do you think the line "I trained as a combat vet" might be confusing?

We need to be clear that he was a veterinarian in the army and not a veteran in the army. Also – does the army even have vets? Maybe the cavalry does? Do they still use horses in wars? Why can't we do something to stop this? I mean they're just horses – what did they ever do?

p.12 Instead of "I can't feel my hands anymore" Tony should say,

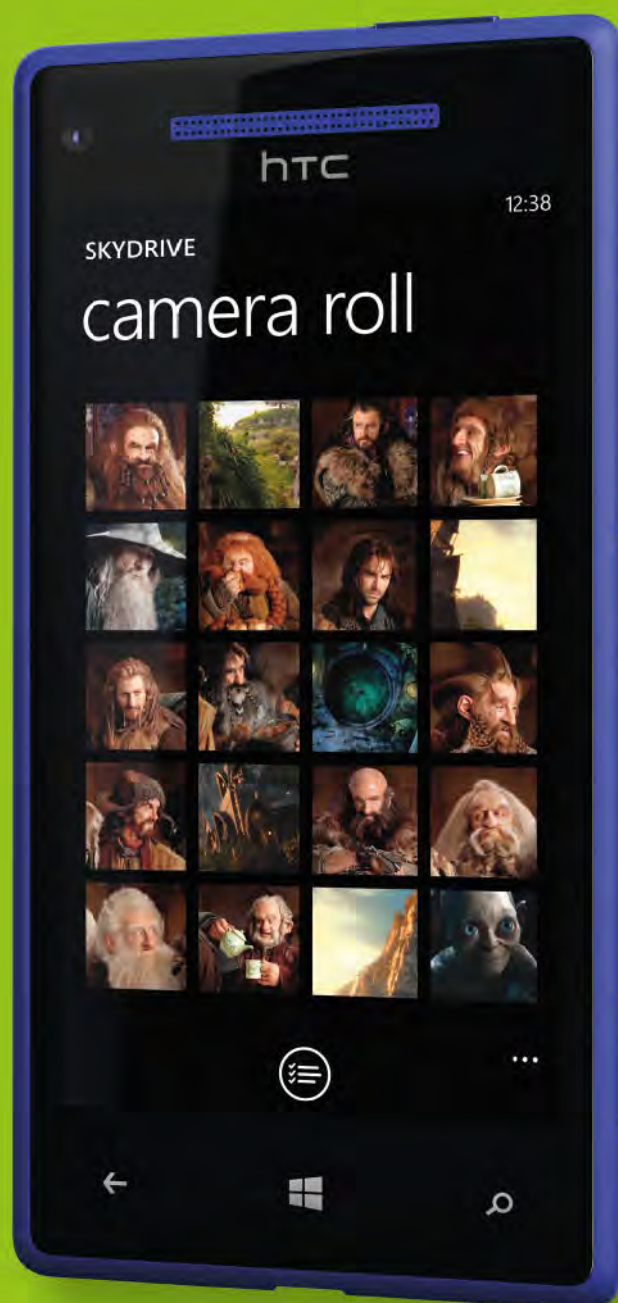
"My hands. My hands! Can't feel my hands!" Much more playable. This guy really can't feel his hands and he's not about to hold back. That's what I'd say in real life if I couldn't feel *my* hands. Remember: film is emotion.

p.25 Wouldn't he get even more upset at the way the animal drop-in centre is being managed? I mean who is this new boss? The fact that she's a woman just seems to make things doubly infuriating.

p.28-90 Do we need p28-90?

Richard is currently working on *The Double* and will be back next issue.

See his SkyDrive.



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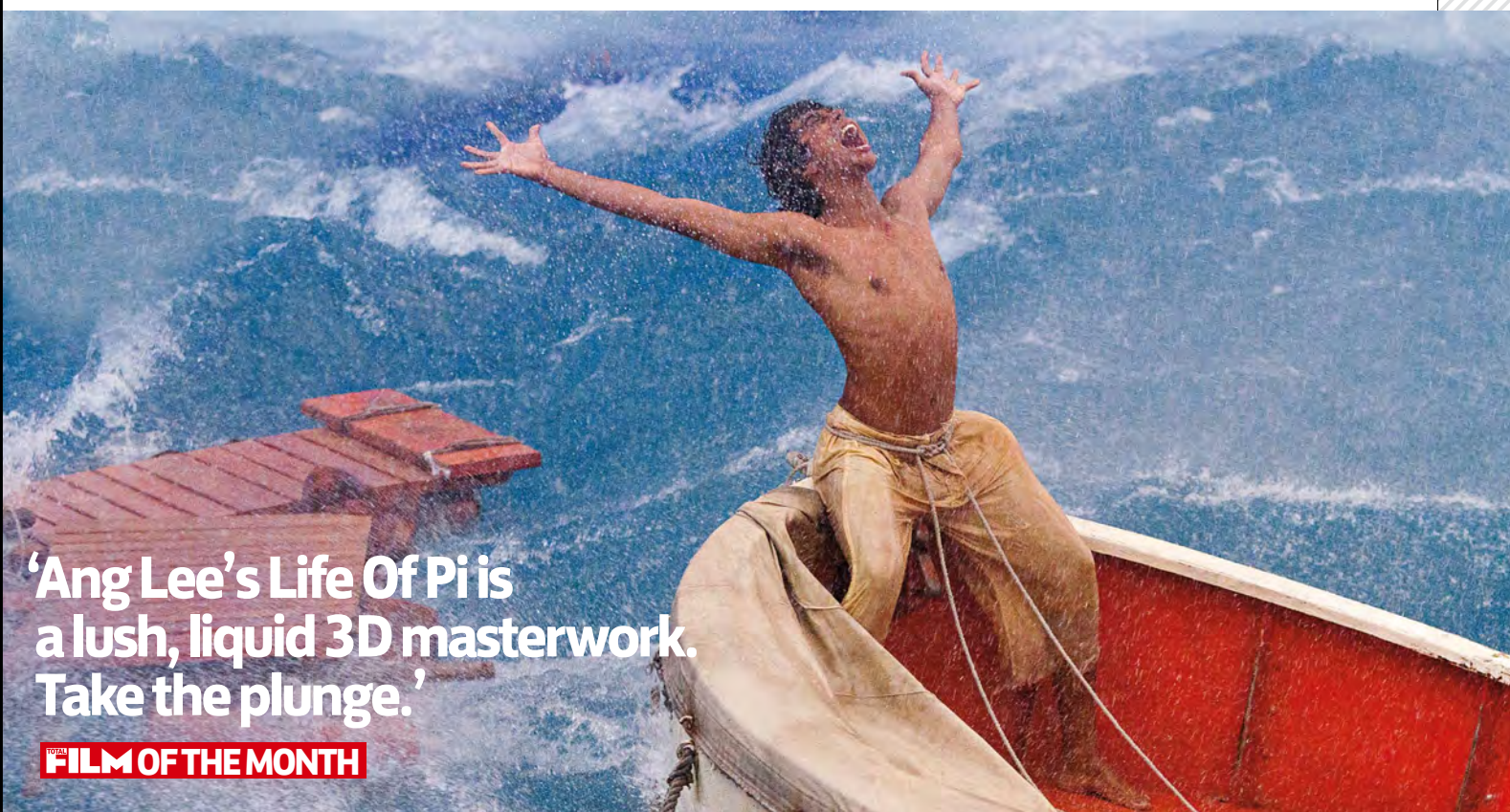
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Every new movie reviewed & rated Screen

★★★★★ OUTSTANDING ★★★★★ VERY GOOD ★★★ GOOD ★★ DISAPPOINTING ★ RUBBISH



'Ang Lee's Life Of Pi is a lush, liquid 3D masterwork. Take the plunge.'

FILM OF THE MONTH

NEW RELEASES 23.11.12-21.12.12

OUT NOW

Gambit	★★	p67
Happy Happy	★★★★	p67
Here Comes The Boom	★★	p57
Silent Hill: Revelation 3D	★	p67

23 NOVEMBER

Cinema Komunisto	★★★	p67
The House I Live In	★★★★	p67
Lawrence Of Arabia	★★★★★	p57
The Muppet Christmas Carol	★★★★	p59
Ninja Scroll	★★★★	p66
Starbuck	★★★	p66

26 NOVEMBER

First	★★★	p66
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29 NOVEMBER

Electric Man	★★	p64
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30 NOVEMBER

Alex Cross	★★	p66
Great Expectations	★★★	p55
The Hunt	★★★★	p61
Laurence Anyways	★★★★	p57
Rise Of The Guardians	★★★	p58

Sightseers	★★★★	p56
Trouble With The Curve	★★★	p62
Yossi	★★★	p64

5 DECEMBER

Seven Psychopaths	★★★	p54
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7 DECEMBER

Celeste & Jesse Forever	★★★	p55
Confession Of A		
Child Of The Century	★★	p57
Gremlins	★★★★	p61
I, Anna	★★★	p61
Life Just Is	★★	p61
The Man With The Iron Fists	★★★	p60
The Oranges	★★★	p61
So Undercover		TF.com
Tu Sera Mon Fils	★★★★	p64
When Santa Fell To Earth	★	p64

13 DECEMBER

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey		TF.com
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14 DECEMBER

Babette's Feast	★★★★	p59
Chasing Ice	★★★★	p59

Dead Europe	★★★	p59
False Trail	★★★	p62
Love Crime	★★★	p62
Neil Young: Journeys		TF.com
Smashed	★★★	p59
Tinker Bell And The Secret Of The Wings	★★★	p62
What Ever Happened To Baby Jane?	★★★★	p62

20 DECEMBER

Life Of Pi	★★★★★	p52
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21 DECEMBER

Pitch Perfect	★★★	p57
West Of Memphis	★★★★	p64

For more reviews visit totalfilm.com/reviews

Lip service:
Celeste & Jesse
Forever, page 55.





Life Of Pi



Out 20 December

Ang Lee, the deep blue sea... in 3D!



DAPTATIONS OF supposedly unfilmable novels are currently arriving at a rate of knots from smart, audacious directors: *Cosmopolis*,

On The Road, *Midnight's Children*, *Cloud Atlas*... But leading the pack is Ang Lee's thrillingly conceived and executed take on Yann Martel's Booker Prize winner.

Cracking the most daunting literary codes has felled many an accomplished filmmaker, from Mike Nichols (*Catch-22*) to David Lynch (*Dune*). What's more, the omens weren't looking good for *Life Of Pi*, with one auteur after another in the frame then out of it

(M. Night Shyamalan, Alfonso Cuarón and Jean-Pierre Jeunet). But then Lee arrived as a shining knight, wielding superior pixel power and warm-blooded empathy.

The Taiwanese director – who's always had a knack for an adap (*Sense And Sensibility*, *The Ice Storm*, *Brokeback Mountain*) – has done handsome justice to Martel's spellbinding 2001 fable about one boy's supreme efforts to survive a tragic shipwreck. *Pi*-hards will delight at Lee's strict devotion to Martel's prose, with only minor deviations to enrich the brew.

What he's engineered is a lush, liquid 3D masterwork that delivers one breath-snatching image after another, kicking off with French India's faded colonial grandeur and segueing into a tidal wave of

marine magnificence: spectacular typhoons followed by turquoise serenity; the prodigiously-staged sinking of an animal-crammed freighter; a nighttime ocean aglow with luminescent sea-life... *Life Of Pi* is a marvel of virtuoso cinematic artistry; it's also a riveting tale of adventure and endurance, Lee deftly integrating sombre themes into his ocean vistas.

CGI of the tiger

Pi is portrayed by three actors. Newcomer Ayush Tandon is the Indian boy growing up in family-owned Pondicherry Zoo, who reveals how he acquired his bizarre name and arrived at his all-encompassing embrace of three religions: Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. *Slumdog Millionaire*'s Iffran Khan is award-worthy as the Toronto-dwelling adult Pi, recounting his

TALKING POINT

Pi is marooned for 227 days, easily trumping the world's longest-known sole survivor. Chinese sailor Poon Lim did 133 days aboard an 8ft raft in the South Atlantic after a U-boat sank his vessel.



SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

CAST AWAY 2000

Tom Hanks befriends a volleyball and wears a loincloth in Robert Zemeckis' Pacific-island survival epic.

BIG FISH 2003

Tim Burton tackles magic realism in a big-top fantasia about fathers, sons and large aquatic vertebrates.

THE FOUNTAIN 2006

Darren Aronofsky's mythic romance traces Hugh Jackman's quest for love across time and the cosmos.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews

'Lee has made a marvel of virtuoso cinematic artistry: a riveting tale of adventure and endurance'

compelling manifestation of wonder within the narrative tapestry. Martel's spiritually minded prose, which comes steeped in meditation and metaphor, tips its hat to God-belief while also striking a humanistic chord, maintaining an edge of ambiguity that allows both believer and atheist room for manoeuvre.

Magic hour

There's a glut of big ideas to wade through in *Life Of Pi*. As Spall says at one point, "It's a lot to take in, to figure out what it all means." (To which the middle-aged Pi responds: "Why does it need to mean anything?") But metaphysical musings are more the icing on the cake, as the film also satisfies as an adrenalinised, death-defying high-seas adventure.

Where Lee has tinkered, he's done so with care and an eye to audience sensibilities: gone are the novel's most horrific animal suffering, the obsessive minutiae of oceanic survival and a hallucinatory episode where Pi dreams up a conversation with Richard Parker. While hardcore disciples might bemoan its absence, it was a shrewd move leaving it out: there's enough magic realism here to satiate the greediest appetite. And besides, it probably wouldn't have sat well with the film's triumph-of-the-spirit dramatic arc. As for the novel's grimly repellent but resonant coda, it remains intact.

Ultimately, it's a tale that revels in unfettered imagination and the possibilities of storytelling, as well as the fierce avoidance of "dry, yeastless factuality" in life. At times, the narrative gets a bit too misty-eyed at its own lofty purpose. Yet it's possible that viewers will embrace Lee's vision with the same fervour as Martel's readers. **Matt Mueller**

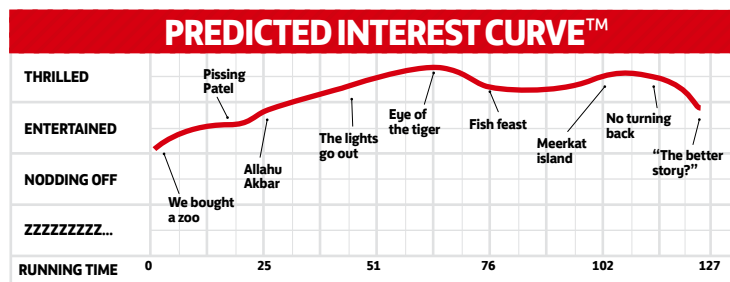
THE VERDICT A riot of saturated colour and delirious imagination, Ang Lee's adapt radiates spirituality. But it's also a simple, thrilling and gently uplifting tale of a boy, a boat and a tiger. Take the plunge.

► **Certificate PG Director** Ang Lee **Starring** Suraj Sharma, Irrfan Khan, Rafe Spall, Ayush Tandon, Gerard Depardieu **Screenplay** David Magee **Distributor** 20th Century Fox **Running time** 127 mins

story in flashback to Martel (Rafe Spall) in Lee's most significant deviation from the source.

Last not least, bearing the brunt of the narrative, is Suraj Sharma as the teenage Pi, who leaves India for Canada with family and menagerie aboard the Japanese cargo ship *Tsimtsum*, only to watch it sink in a savage storm. He's left to fight for survival aboard a lifeboat, his fellow castaways an injured zebra, an orang-utan, a hyena and a ferocious tiger whimsically named Richard Parker. (Needless to say, this unmerry band's numbers are swiftly whittled down.)

In his first acting role, Sharma proves to be both awesome discovery and mild disappointment. The former because he rises valiantly to the challenge of bringing the resourceful Pi to life; the latter because



Pi's emotive musings on subsistence and enlightenment, expressed so movingly on the page, aren't conveyed with as much potency through his performance. It's a game, auspicious effort, though.

Pi's feline tormentor, on the other hand, is a monumental creation, vividly brought to life with a mix of animatronics, CGI and reality. Like Caesar in *Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes*, Richard Parker is another bold leap forward for emotionally resonant digital characters: magnificent, frightening, heartbreaking, and an unceasingly

His new wig was particularly unconvincing.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

BARTON FINK 1991

NY playwright John Turturro goes bananas in LA in the Coens' gothic psychodrama.

ADAPTATION 2002

Hall-of-mirrors Hollywood satire with Nic Cage as stuck screenwriter Charlie Kaufman.

LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN 2006

Wonky-plotted Tarantino pastiche rocking a great cast, sparkly dialogue and a stupid title.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews

TALKING POINT

Martin McDonagh wrote the script for *Seven Psychopaths* several years before *In Bruges*, but delayed making it because, "I always knew it was bigger than the tools I had."

Seven Psychopaths

★★★★☆ Out 5 December

The In Bruges gang goes to Hollywood...

HES THE BEST WRITER OF HIS generation, but he needs to stay focused," says loose cannon Billy Bickle (Sam Rockwell) of his buddy Marty (Colin Farrell), an Irish screenwriter adrift in Hollywood trying to finish his latest screenplay, *Seven Psychopaths*. It's something that may, one day, be said about Martin McDonagh of *In Bruges* fame, but not this time. In his second film, a loopy, loop-filled black comedy, it's impossible to separate what's witty self-reflexivity from what's simply an Irish screenwriter adrift in Hollywood trying to finish his latest screenplay. Still, there's fun to be had trying.

Like post-Tarantino gangster farces that proliferated in the 1990s, *Seven Psychopaths* introduces explosive LA characters – Marty and his girlfriend (Abbie Cornish), Billy and Hans (Christopher Walken), who kidnap

dogs for money, mob boss Charlie (Woody Harrelson), who *loves* his shih tzu, plus the eponymous septet of killers – then waits for them to messily intersect. Each new arrival is either famous (Harry Dean Stanton, Michael Pitt, *Precious*' Gabourey Sibide), insane, or both, as if creator and creation have become overly giddy with the possibilities of Hollywood.

Just as (fictional) Marty becomes distracted by Billy, Hans and Charlie, so too does (real) Martin allow this average crime caper to become untethered, letting his larger-than-life characters steer it into crazily metatextual territory. One standout sequence shows Bickle acting out what should happen next in Marty's film: all exploding heads and

constantly up for debate. "We making French movies now?" asks Bickle as the narrative takes a talky about-turn. Elsewhere, Hans tells Marty, truthfully, "Your women characters are awful." But if McDonagh can see what's wrong, why

not fix it rather than satirise it? Viewed in this light, perhaps the freewheeling plot is a get-out-of-jail-free card for a writer who doesn't quite know what to do next, rather than evidence of his

(undisputed) originality? Whatever it is, you'd be mental to miss it – a little more focus and he may yet earn that best-writer accolade. **Matt Glasby**

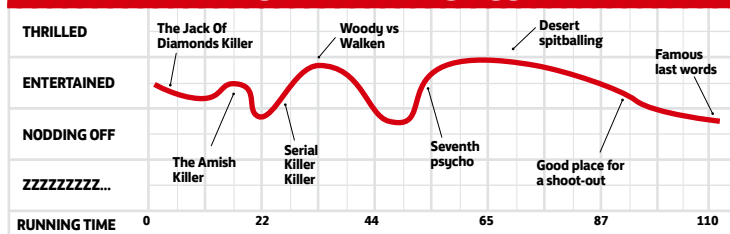
'What's anarchy and what's untidiness is up for debate'

bouncing boobs. It's a tour de force, and precisely the sort of crap McDonagh won't let himself make. Although Rockwell and Walken have lots of fun out-whackjobbing each other, and the dialogue is profanely silly-smart, what's anarchy and what's simply untidiness is

THE VERDICT Engagingly off-centre, like Charlie Kaufman taking down Quentin Tarantino, this shaggy-dog story is a place-holder film for McDonagh, and often closer to chaos than it is to genius.

► **Certificate 15** **Director** Martin McDonagh **Starring** Colin Farrell, Sam Rockwell, Christopher Walken, Woody Harrelson, Abbie Cornish **Screenplay** Martin McDonagh **Distributor** Momentum **Running time** 110 mins

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



Great Expectations

★★★★☆ Out 30 November Expect the, um, expected.

OUR GREAT EXPECTATIONS FOR adaptations of vintage literature include something new, as well as old. A pity, then, that Mike Newell's luscious and super-cautious take on Dickens has none of the verve of Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* or Alfonso Cuarón's stylish 1998 updating of this class-climbing classic. Granted, there's beauty by the bucket-load in its Kentish landscapes. The Victorian high-life into which penniless orphan Pip (Jeremy Irvine) is propelled after being favoured by the eccentric Miss Havisham also bewitches. No shortage of atmosphere or quality either; when Ralph Fiennes' snarling convict Magwitch looms from behind a tombstone, it's as terrifying as anything in David Lean's 1946 take.

But big vistas and big names can't compensate for the necessity to cram Dickens' sprawling subplots into a two-hour film. A shiny half-crown to the urchin who can work out Magwitch's backstory from the rushed flashbacks here. Key characters like Robbie Coltrane's

lawyer Jaggers are stuffed into scene slivers. And why play the comic scenes so broadly that Pip's relatives, David Walliams' Mr Pumblechook and Sally Hawkins' Mrs Joe, seem transplanted from a TV spoof? As does Helena Bonham Carter's Miss Havisham – more *Bride Of Frankenstein* than literature's most famous jilted lady.

Thankfully scriptwriter David Nicholls (*One Day*) ramps up the psychological acuity for the central romance, delicately painting Pip and his dream girl as victims warped by childhood manipulation by adults. Holliday Grainger's spiky Estella and Irvine's sensitive Pip lift the film out of its cosy mode into something finer. **Kate Stables**

THE VERDICT Its glossy looks, first-rate playing and famous pedigree will be catnip to book-groupies. But do we really need another dutiful adap?

► **Certificate** 12A **Director** Mike Newell
Starring Ralph Fiennes, Helena Bonham Carter, Jeremy Irvine **Screenplay** David Nicholls **Distributor** Lionsgate
Running time 128 mins



He made a beautiful bridesmaid.



Celeste & Jesse Forever

★★★★☆ Out 7 December Rashida's all that.

SUBVERTING THE ROMCOM with a falling-out-of-love story is a bit old hat. Many have tried; many have failed. *Celeste And Jesse Forever* also tries and fails, but entertains along the way.

Rashida Jones (who co-writes) plays Celeste, a proper grown-up with a high-flying job, who was once married to slacker Jesse (Andy Samberg). They're recently divorced, not that you'd know it by the way they make goo-goo eyes at each other.

Celeste and Jesse are an irritating pair; self-indulgent, gabby yuppies, who should really just shut up and kiss. Some of this is intentional, but an additional 10 per cent of the irritation results from cutesy jokes that don't work. This is a romcom without the 'rom', but also, largely, without the 'com'.

Things improve when a genuine obstacle to Jesse and Celeste's hitherto tediously inevitable reunion appears, morphing the film into a vision of LA ennui à la *Greenberg*, *Passenger Side* or the upcoming *Nobody Walks*. But the performances are a mixed bag. Elijah Wood is awkward as the gay

BFF, and as for *Saturday Night Live*'s bright young hope? It's hard to tell where Samberg's feckless character ends and his feckless performance begins.

But *Celeste And Jesse* is redeemed by the first half of the equation. Celeste has real personality flaws that, unlike a tendency to adorably spill lattes over eligible bachelors, make for a perceptively drawn character arc. But none of it would work if Rashida Jones wasn't such a charming actress. In a career that's consisted of underwritten girlfriend parts, Celeste is a role in which she can stretch and bend. But then again, she did co-write it herself. **Ellen E. Jones**

THE VERDICT This honest, if not funny, comedy is all about Celeste. If anyone can make you sympathise with affluent LA yuppies, Rashida Jones can.

► **Certificate** 15 **Director** Lee Toland Krieger
Starring Rashida Jones, Andy Samberg, Will McCormack, Emma Roberts, Elijah Wood
Screenplay Rashida Jones, Will McCormack
Distributor Buena Vista **Running time** 92 mins

True love means never complaining about having to wear an anorak.



Sightseers

★★★★☆ Out now Think Kill List in a caravan.

FROM BADLANDS TO NATURAL *Born Killers*, lovers-on-the-run flicks take pulp fiction narratives for romantic rides across America, the sweep and the drama of the scenery matching the magnitude of the heroes' emotions – and their crimes. The genius of *Kill List* director Ben Wheatley's third film, a parochial black comedy based on a screenplay by lead actors Steve Oram and Alice Lowe, is that it takes all this cultural baggage and transports it, by caravan, to Redditch.

As normal-seeming new boyfriend Chris (Oram) whisks homebody Tina (Lowe) away on a UK holiday, the trail of deaths they cause begins mundanely, with a car park-based RTA at the Crich Tramway Museum. The settings more than match, as the pair explore Little England in all its pretty pettiness, from Castleton's Blue John

Cavern to Keswick's Pencil Museum. Even their star-crossed love is constantly undercut by their deadpan patter, not to mention Tina's penchant for pot pourri and crotchless (but crocheted) knickers. When she envisages them dying together in the name of romance, Chris' response is characteristically Partridge-esque. "Going to salsa's romantic," he says. "We could try that first."

It might not sound much on paper, but it's all in the delivery, the appealing lead performances combining with Wheatley's sudden tonal shifts to produce a film that's funny, sinister and strangely moving. Don't write in, but the Midlands accents help here: unpretentious and unexpected, they bring to mind Shane

Meadows' early work (which this strongly recalls) and undercut the characters' more extreme pronouncements. "He's ruined the tram museum for me now," huffs Chris of his first victim, while Tina's attempt to talk dirty results in: "He said he wanted to shit in my hand

and make me use it as a brown lipstick!" Between killer lines and skull-cracking murders, there's a weary reality that makes *Sightseers* sad where lesser works might skew silly. As Tina's fear of being left behind by Chris lead them further along

'Tonal shifts make this funny, sinister and strangely moving'

the road to ruin, their deteriorating relationship is echoed by the increasingly desolate surroundings. One scene ends with a dog eating sick – you don't see that in *True Romance*.

Another, in Keswick Pencil Museum, leaves you unsure whether to laugh or cry. It may peter out a little towards the end, as all road movies must, but for the most part this is a staycation to cherish. **Matt Glasby**

THE VERDICT At first *Father Ted* cute, but then *League Of Gentlemen* cruel – a combination that Wheatley never lets curdle – this is a dark little delight.

► **Certificate 15** Director Ben Wheatley Starring Alice Lowe, Steve Oram, Eileen Davies, Jonathan Aris, Richard Glover **Screenplay** Alice Lowe, Steve Oram, Amy Jump **Distributor** Studiocanal **Running time** 88 mins

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

WITHNAIL & I 1987

Alcoholic actors Richard E Grant and Paul McGann go "on holiday by mistake" with debauched/depressing/hilarious results.

A ROOM FOR ROME BRASS 1999

Shane Meadows' third feature details Andrew (*This Is England*) Shim's strange coming of age.

SUBMARINE 2010

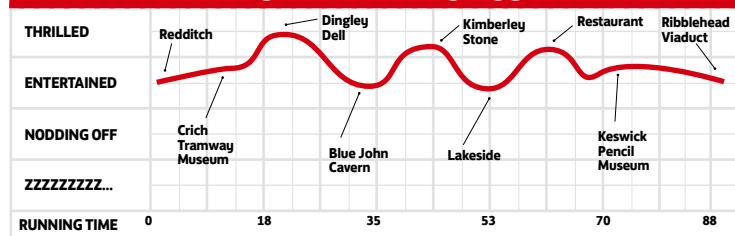
Widescreen teenage emotions writ small in *TF* columnist Richard Ayoade's directorial debut.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews

TALKING POINT

Steve Oram and Alice Lowe created their characters for a TV series that never happened. They actually took this exact trip in a campervan, improvising along the way.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





Pitch Perfect

★★★★☆ Out 21 December Hollywood joins the Glee club...

MOVIES OFTEN LOOK TO TV FOR inspiration, whether we're talking remakes or spin-offs. *Pitch Perfect* is neither – but this all-singing, all-dancing college-bound musical comedy clearly owes a hefty debt to overwrought TV dramedy *Glee*. That's not a huge surprise, considering its creators: director Jason Moore has helmed more than a handful of primetime soapers (*Dawson's Creek*, *One Tree Hill*, *Everwood*), and writer Kay Cannon's day gig is *30 Rock*. So, it not only looks like *Glee*, it's paced like *Glee*, and if you could smell it, it would reek of whatever *Glee* smells like...

That's really the only bad news, though. The good news is, it's much funnier and meaner than the show that influenced it; and if you squint a little, it's basically an all-girl remake of *Revenge Of The Nerds*. Real-life Tony winner Anna Kendrick toplines as a snippy, eye-rolling wannabe record producer who joins a hapless all-girl a cappella group at her college. Their ragtag crew includes a pushy alpha-blonde (Anna Camp), an Asian serial killer (maybe), a black lesbian and 'Fat Amy' (*Bridesmaids*' irrepressible Rebel Wilson, who steals every scene she's in). They are, naturally, the underdogs, and through your standard

young adult struggles, they learn to work together and become a crackerjack force of vocal fury, as evidenced by the furious (for an a cappella competition, anyway), *Bring It On*-esque finale.

Although it takes fitful stabs at social relevance and tearjerky, at heart *Pitch Perfect* is teenage wish-fulfilment candy floss, with no nutritional value to speak of. Still, it's wrapped in a shiny, eye-pleasing package, and unlike its increasingly cloying forebear *Glee*, almost impossible to hate.

Ironically, given its title, the film's tone often wobbles uneasily between heartfelt and snarky but, overall, it's a satisfying, and occasionally even fist-pumping, tribute to the enduring spirit of misfits and weirdos.

Ken McIntyre

THE VERDICT *Glee* and *Glee*-haters alike should rally around this raucous musical comedy. Rebel Wilson is hilarious, Anna Kendrick is terrific and there are as many gross-out gags as there are singing numbers.

► **Certificate 12A Director** Jason Moore **Starring** Anna Kendrick, Brittany Snow, Elizabeth Banks, Rebel Wilson **Screenplay** Kay Cannon **Distributor** Universal **Running time** 112 mins



LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

★★★★★ Out 23 November

JAMES BOND ISN'T THE ONLY ONE blowing out 50 candles this year. Half a century after its original release, David Lean's historical epic is back on the big screen in a bright 4k digital restoration. Drawing heavily on Colonel TE Lawrence's *Seven Pillars Of Wisdom* – his own account of his efforts to unite warring Arab tribes against their Turkish rulers – its politics are simplistic. Yet this seven-Oscar wonder remains exhilarating thanks to Freddie Young's majestic desert lensing, Maurice Jarre's gorgeous score and Peter O'Toole's career-defining portrayal of the feted but flawed protagonist. **William Parker**

► **Certificate PG Running time** 217 mins



LAURENCE ANYWAYS

★★★★☆ Out 30 November

A MOVIE YOU MIGHT IMAGINE PEDRO Almodóvar making in his early days, Xavier Dolan's third feature is a Montreal melodrama with its heart on its sleeve. A decade-long saga beginning in the late '80s, its title character (Melvil Poupaud) is a transsexual male having an affair with Frederique (Suzanne Clément), who struggles with the idea that her man wants to be a woman. Dolan never flinches across this bold, brassy piece; it's confidently directed, stylishly shot, passionately acted and evocatively scored. And it's got the best '80s hairstyles since *The Wedding Singer*. **James Mottram**

► **Certificate 15 Running time** 168 mins



CONFESSION OF A CHILD OF THE CENTURY

★★★★☆ Out 7 December

PETE DOHERTY MAKES HIS FIRST big-screen outing in this sterile stab at Alfred de Musset's 1836 confessional. It must have seemed like a good idea at the time, casting the former Libertines frontman as Octave, the debauched Parisian, but the novelty soon wears off. Suffocated by Sylvie Verheyde's lifeless direction, Doherty's so ill at ease you'd think his briches were too tight. A love story between Octave and his cousin Brigitte (Charlotte Gainsbourg), it doesn't help that – in a French film – all dialogue is in English. The result is dusty, drab and dreary. **James Mottram**

► **Certificate TBC Running time** 125 mins



HERE COMES THE BOOM

★★★★☆ Out now

HERE COMES THE BOOM IS NOT THE most idiotic movie of the year (hello, *Battleship*). It's not even the most idiotic movie in Kevin James' tawdry 'canon' (hello, *I Now Pronounce You Chuck & Larry*). It is, however, still idiotic. Taking its cues from every faux-inspirational '80s B-movie ever, *Boom* is about a bumbling biology teacher (James), who seeks to save his school's music programme and teacher (Henry Winkler) from government cutbacks by moonlighting as a mixed martial arts fighter. Cue 105 painful minutes of a fat guy getting punched in the face and falling down. **Ken McIntyre**

► **Certificate 12A Running time** 105 mins

A new-look *Sons Of Anarchy* aimed for a wider audience.

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

PETER PAN 1953
There's more than a little of Pan's impish charm in *ROTG*'s Jack Frost.

HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2010
Whirlwind Viking adventure from DreamWorks in eye-stalking 3D. Parts 2 and 3 are on the way.

ARTHUR CHRISTMAS 2011
Last Christmas' animation, with Jim Broadbent as a less burly Santa.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews



Rise Of The Guardians

★★★☆☆ Out 30 November Father kick-ass and his amazing friends.

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE OPENING to a potentially offensive joke. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy walk into a bar... DreamWorks Animation gets the last laugh with *Rise Of The Guardians*, though. Their latest CGI adventure is a glittering yuletide yarn that just about overcomes its gimmicky concept.

Following on from the successes of *How To Train Your Dragon* and the *Kung Fu Pandas*, *ROTG* warps traditional fairytales as childhood 'Guardians' North (ie Santa, voiced by Alec Baldwin), E. Aster Bunnymund (Hugh Jackman) and Tooth (Isla Fisher) unite against nightmare-spreading boogeyman Pitch (Jude Law).

Notions that this is basically a Christmas version of *Avengers Assemble*, though, prove unfounded. With its watery opening shot of soon-to-be-Guardian Jack Frost (Chris

Pine) drifting in icy purgatory, it's more like a kiddies *Bourne Identity*. As Frost battles his amnesia and becomes an action hero, all that's missing is Matt Damon ramming pens into unfortunate places.

Also missing, sadly, is a script that really gets its larger-than-life characters interacting with each other. Despite all the rampant, twinkly magic, there are few sparks flying between our motley crew. The best exchange comes when everybody clambers into Santa's pimped-out sled. "I hope you like loop-the-loops," the jolly fellow bellows. "I hope you like carrots," mutters Bunny.

Visually, things are bright and crisp as Christmas morning. With Guillermo del

Toro on producing duties, *ROTG* looks a million bucks. The 3D jerks to life inside Santa's toyshop, a banquet of background detail, while the sorcery-infused battle scenes swoop, sparkle and occasionally terrify.

'Despite all the rampant, twinkly magic, there are few sparks flying'

us gawping at its pretty visuals that it forgets to craft its story with the same amount of care. **Josh Winning**

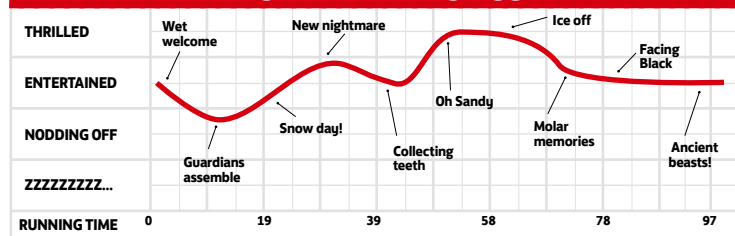
THE VERDICT More "oooh... aaah" than "ho-ho-ho", *ROTG* is so full of yuletide razzmatazz that only true Scrooges will have trouble stomaching it. If only Santa's workshop had given the script more of a tinker...

► **Certificate** PG **Director** Peter Ramsey
Starring Alec Baldwin, Chris Pine, Hugh Jackman, Isla Fisher, Jude Law, Dakota Goyo
Screenplay David Lindsay-Abaire
Distributor Paramount **Running time** 97 mins

TALKING POINT

The film is based on, but not a direct adap of, William Joyce's *Guardians Of Childhood* books. "I don't want people to go see the movie and go, 'Oh, I like the book better,'" the author reasons.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™



Toro on producing duties, *ROTG* looks a million bucks. The 3D jerks to life inside Santa's toyshop, a banquet of background detail, while the sorcery-infused battle scenes swoop, sparkle and occasionally terrify.

The pacing also takes on prisoners – Guardians



The title extended to their morning eggs.

Smashed

★★★★☆ Out 14 December Mary shows her bottle...

IT'S ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO see an actor come of age. And that's exactly what happens to Mary Elizabeth Winstead in *Smashed*. The *Scott Pilgrim Vs. The World* star has yet to truly earn her dramatic spurs – until now. Winstead stars as Kate, a primary school teacher with a drinking problem. This is a woman who wakes up, having wet the bed, and then sips from a half-drunk beer bottle while she's in the shower. Her husband, Charlie (Aaron Paul), likes to booze too; so do all their friends. But when Kate goes to school, then vomits in front of her class, things start to go awry – not least when she foolishly covers up by claiming she's pregnant. The next night, she helps a female barfly out with a lift, then winds up downtown smoking crack.

Even urinating in a store because her booze-addled bladder is so weak, Kate realises she needs to quit drinking – a decision aided by her school's vice principal, Mr. Davies (Nick Offerman), who is nine years drink-free, and Jenny (*The Help*'s Octavia Spencer), a sponsor he introduces her to. Of course, the road to sobriety is strewn with difficulties – not least that Charlie doesn't want to stop.

Like *Blue Valentine* crossed with an AA meeting, *Smashed* is really a study of the disintegration of a marriage, perfectly realised by Winstead and *Breaking Bad*'s Paul. But running at 85 minutes, the script feels threadbare, like a first draft that really needs a proper third-act.

Doubtless, anyone's who struggled with alcohol addiction will recognise a lot of truth. Writer/director James Ponsoldt – whose debut feature, 2006's *Off The Black*, saw Nick Nolte play a chronic alcoholic – certainly achieves a high-strung realism here. But with a story that feels like a one-hour drama stretched to breaking point, *Smashed* is never the smash you might hope for. **James Mottram**

THE VERDICT Two fine performances – particularly from an unhinged Winstead – almost elevate *Smashed* to greatness. But an under-worked script leaves you feeling groggy and bleary-eyed by the end.

► **Certificate** TBC **Director** James Ponsoldt **Starring** Mary Elizabeth Winstead, Aaron Paul, Octavia Spencer, Nick Offerman, Megan Mullally **Screenplay** James Ponsoldt, Susan Burke **Distributor** Sony **Running time** 85 mins



CHASING ICE

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

THERE CAN'T BE MANY PEOPLE STILL resistant to the inconvenient truth of climate change. But any that are should be made to see Jeff Orlowski's eco-doc, which charts the efforts of *National Geographic* photographer James Balog to film time-lapse imagery of glacial retreat. As this heroic campaigner battles harsh conditions and a bum knee to install 30 cameras across three continents, some may ask whether it's worth the trouble. They'll soon be silenced by the jaw-dropping results: visually spectacular montages of ice floes receding that will make you gasp and move you to tears. **Neil Smith**

► **Certificate** TBC **Running time** 76 mins



BABETTE'S FEAST

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

ONE OF THE GREAT FOODIE MOVIES, Gabriel Axel's adaptation of a story by Danish author Karen Blixen (*Out Of Africa*) picked up the 1987 Oscar for Best Foreign Film. In the title role, Stéphane Audran plays a mysterious Frenchwoman who in 1871 comes to an austere Lutheran community in Jutland and is taken on as their cook. After years of preparing their abstemious diet she nets a lottery win – and decides to blow the lot on a grand gourmet feast for her disconcerted employers. Audran is luminous as the centre of a gentle, generous film about grace. Oh, and grub. **Philip Kemp**

► **Certificate** U **Running time** 103 mins (tbc)



DEAD EUROPE

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

ADAPTED FROM A 2005 NOVEL BY controversial Aussie author Christos Tsiolkas, Tony Krawitz's vivid travelogue follows Ewen Leslie's antipodean photographer to Greece to scatter his father's ashes and lay a family curse to rest. It's not the only thing he ends up laying, despite his opportunistic shag-tourism being repeatedly interrupted by Kodi Smit-McPhee's (*The Road*) spooked teenage refugee. Saddled with a plank-like performance from Leslie, it's intriguing and pretentious in equal measure, capturing the feeling of being adrift in a foreign world, but then failing to capitalise on it. **Matt Glasby**

► **Certificate** TBC **Running time** 84 mins (tbc)



THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL

★★★★☆ Out 23 November

THE FUZZY FARCEURS' RECENT comeback should draw audiences to this 1992 favourite, a faithful adap of Dickens' Yuletide perennial that chimes with both the author's bicentenary and the season. Michael Caine makes a marvellous Scrooge in a movie with more heart than most, a result of a team still mourning Jim Henson. ("People who become puppeteers are far gentler souls than people who become actors," Caine claims.) Yet there are plenty of laughs and a host of memorable songs crooned by everyone from Miss Piggy to Statler and Waldorf. **Neil Smith**

► **Certificate** U **Running time** 85 mins

He was perfecting a new look: Red Steel.



The Man With The Iron Fists

★★★☆☆ Out 7 December Everybody was kung-fu fighting...

LIFE IS CHEAP IN WICKED, whore-mongering Jungle Village, a muddy, noisy hellscape filled with warring tribes of psychopaths. And that's on a good day. When word gets out that a large shipment of the emperor's gold is passing through town in a few days, a motley crew of murderous weirdos and creeps show up, including metal-skinned musclemán Brass Body (Dave Bautista), dandified sex freak Jack Knife (a plump Russell Crowe), and blade-shooting leather enthusiast Zen Yi, The X Blade (Rick Yune), all of them eyeing the pile of booty and swearing bloody revenge on each other.

At the centre of this gore-spurting kung-fu riot lies a lowly blacksmith named, sensibly enough, Blacksmith (writer/director/star and Wu-Tang Clan-er for life RZA), who forges the village's myriad

instruments of destruction and also provides pithy narration ("Now, these motherfuckers had Gatlin guns...") to help sort out the meandering storylines and heaping piles of chopped-up corpses.

Co-scripted by splatter-prince Eli Roth, *The Man With The Iron Fists* is the work of hardcore videogame enthusiasts with an extensive knowledge of hyperactive, badly dubbed '70s chopsocky flicks and *Master Of Kung Fu* comics. As such, there is very little characterisation, and the dialogue is mostly threats and grunts, which frees RZA up to concentrate on the eye-bulging visuals and the non-stop action.

Like Quentin Tarantino's films – QT 'presents' this one – *TMWTIF* exists in its own universe, one that could be 1930, or possibly an alt-world, steam-punky 2012. It looks like a Chinatown gift shop exploded all over it, every scene crammed with karate-flick clichés, a riot of skulls, dragons, ribbons, smoke, and gushing geysers of grue.

The sound design is just as intricate and busy, all chittering, clanking and hissing, anchored by a post-hip hop soundtrack of B-movie beats. There is little for A-listers Crowe and Lucy Liu to do, aside from lopping off heads, but they do

'It is crammed with karate-flick clichés and geysers of grue'

it well enough. Alas, it's RZA's portrayal of the humble blacksmith that almost derails proceedings.

He is clearly not an actor, and his attempts at emoting are cringe-worthy. The tone, too, is bizarrely stoic, even

though everything about *TMWTIF* is as campy as a John Waters BBQ. Still, you're getting what you came for – if that's eye-gouging, limb-rending, thrashing, smashing, slashing, claret-caked mayhem.

Ken McIntyre

THE VERDICT Grisly and goofy, this ode to the Shaw Brothers' '70s-era kung fu epics serves up 96 minutes of murder and mutilation and not a lot else. Sweet soundtrack, though.

► **Certificate 18** Director RZA Starring Russell Crowe, Lucy Liu, Rick Yune, RZA, Dave Bautista **Screenplay** Eli Roth, RZA **Distributor** Universal **Running time** 96 mins

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

SHOGUN ASSASSIN 1980
Genre touchstone that's actually two Lone Wolf And Cub movies spliced together.

KILL BILL: VOL. 1 2003
RZA was BAFTA-nominated for his soundtrack work on QT's ultra-violent valentine to Far Eastern cinema.

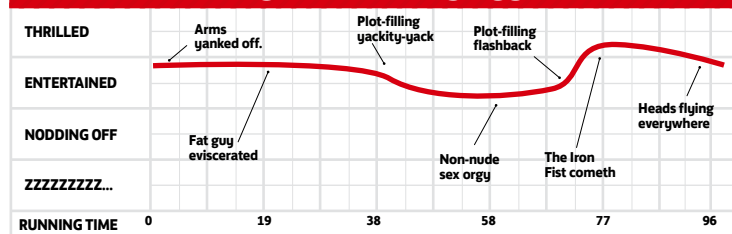
KUNG FU HUSTLE 2004
Chop-socky slapstick of the highest order from Stephen Chow. Whatever happened to the sequel?

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TALKING POINT

A lifelong enthusiast, RZA already has a few martial-arts credits to his name, including Jim Jarmusch's *Ghost Dog: The Way Of The Samurai*; he's also playing Blind Master in *G.I. Joe: Retaliation*.

PREDICTED INTEREST CURVE™





The Hunt

★★★★★ Out 30 November Suspicious minds...

THE LOST BOY OF DOGME 95 comes home with this flawed but tense psychological drama. Duly praised for his breakout feature *Festen* (1998), Thomas Vinterberg's career has since wobbled from mixed bag (*It's All About Love*) to misfiring (*Dear Wendy*) to missed-UK-cinemas (*Submarino*). But *The Hunt* revisits *Festen*'s ensemble turf and hot-topic thrust with a confident adult eye, upgrading its histrionics to a cool, calm, crisply acted study of collective hysteria.

At the centre is *Casino Royale*'s red-eyed baddie Mads Mikkelsen as divorcee and likeable nursery teacher Lucas. He's no villain, but his rural Danish community sees one in him when a young girl, Klara (Annika Wedderkopp), sets rumours flying with accusations of improprieties.

Vinterberg and co-writer Tobias Lindholm disarm the did-he-do-it cliché by swiftly asserting Lucas' innocence and shifting focus to the spread of suspicion. The finer points of the locals' leap to demonise Lucas are rushed and fuzzy, true, yet the cast take up the slack: Mikkelsen's bruised portrait of cornered-animal magnetism (which won him Best Actor at Cannes), bluff best buddy Thomas Bo

Larsen and affecting turns from the kids (Wedderkopp and, as Lucas' son, Lasse Fogelstrøm) nail the panic and paranoia.

They flesh out a precision picture of fragile community bonds, ranging with microscopic focus from male bonding to stand-offs in local hotspots (supermarkets, churches) that bristle with danger. Aided by the unobtrusively clammy grip of DoP Charlotte Bruus Christensen's autumnal images, Vinterberg's directorial restraint makes the few violent eruptions all the more painful to watch. But it's the suspense that sticks with us. We see how the fib began, but where will it end? Vinterberg keeps us guessing right up to and after an end shot that suggests how tough some viral rumours are to shake off. **Kevin Harley**

THE VERDICT Vinterberg lands his finest film in over a decade with a taut, teasing study in sense and susceptibility, given ballast by a suitably shaken and shell-shocked lead turn from Mikkelsen.

► **Certificate 15** Director Thomas Vinterberg Starring Mads Mikkelsen, Thomas Bo Larsen, Lasse Fogelstrøm, Annika Wedderkopp, Susse Wold Screenplay Thomas Vinterberg, Tobias Lindholm Distributor Verve Pictures Running time 115 mins



THE ORANGES

★★★★★ Out 7 December

A FILM OVERSHADOWED BY ITS CAST, Julian Farino's lightweight dramedy sees Hugh Laurie's suburban dad fall for the daughter (Leighton Meester) of neighbouring pal Oliver Platt. Catherine Keener and Allison Janney are largely wasted in shrill wife roles, while *Arrested Development*'s Alia Shawkat never quite clicks as our wry eye into the chaos, but it's an amiable, relatively unpredictable domestic farce. An off-kilter script and winning turns from Laurie, Janney and Meester help disguise how much the film is hedging its bets, flirting with a darkness it never quite dares to embrace. **Emma Dibdin**

► **Certificate 15** Running time 90 mins

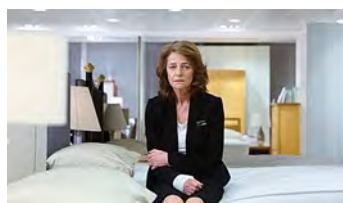


LIFE JUST IS

★★★★★ Out 7 December

BRIT DIRECTOR ALEX BARRETT'S dialogue-driven debut follows four believable, if none-too-compelling London uni grads across a week, as they stew over growing pains and romantic dilemmas (Jay grapples with her new relationship, while Tom and Claire negotiate a growing attraction). Barrett admirably tries to stretch beyond this run-of-the-mill TV-drama set-up via the housemates' debates over larger questions. But pretensions toward Scandinavian arthouse territory (one character reads existential philosophy and is tormented by visions of St Francis) sit awkwardly. **Carmen Gray**

► **Certificate TBC** Running time 102 mins (tbc)

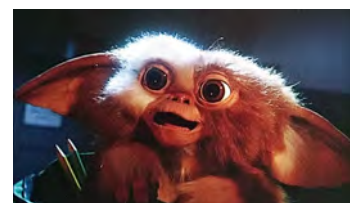


I, ANNA

★★★★★ Out 7 December

A SLICE OF MODERN LONDON NOIR is served up in writer/director Barnaby Southcombe's debut. His real-life mum, Charlotte Rampling, stars as a lonely, middle-aged divorcee who becomes chief suspect in a murder investigation led by a jaded police inspector (Gabriel Byrne). The flashback-laden story lacks plausibility and relies on familiar generic devices (exhibit A: the amnesiac femme fatale). Yet the acting's shrewdly understated and the mood evocatively downbeat, thanks to the muted palette, the brutalist Barbican architecture and Richard Hawley's melancholic songs. **Tom Dawson**

► **Certificate 15** Running time 91 mins



GREMLINS

★★★★★ Out 7 December

TWO YEARS AFTER *E.T.*, STEVEN Spielberg gave it a mischievous sibling in Joe Dante's anarchic creature feature, a subversive parable on the dangers of irresponsible pet care that doubles as an antidote to small-town Americana and Yuletide sentimentality. Built around a cutesy furball that spawns an army of uncontrollable ids when allowed to get wet, it's as much a Freudian nightmare as a celebration of monsters behaving badly. More than either, it's a treat for movie buffs, Dante peppering it with filmmaker cameos, cartoonish slapstick and satirical swipes at Hollywood classics from yesteryear. **Neil Smith**

► **Certificate 15** Running time 106 mins

"I still don't remember whether I fired six shots or only five..."



Trouble With The Curve

★★★★☆ Out 30 November Clint swings for the fences...

AFTER HIS HARANGUING OF an empty chair at the Republican National Convention, you might think Clint Eastwood would give furniture a wide berth. But he's at it again in *Trouble With The Curve*, taking such umbrage with a coffee table it winds up in pieces.

Don't worry, folks: Dirty Harry's not losing his marbles. But he is losing his eyesight, an irksome infirmity for a man who makes his living scouting baseball players. With an ambitious upstart after his job, Eastwood's ornery old Gus could use some help. Enter his estranged daughter Mickey (Amy Adams), a busy lawyer who grudgingly agrees to join him on a trip to North Carolina to check out a red-hot young prospect.

Over the hill but not out for the count, Clint's latest incarnation is a familiar one for a star who has been playing pretty much the same role since *Unforgiven*. For once though he doesn't direct himself, handing the reins to longtime producing partner Robert Lorenz. The latter has inherited his mentor's no-nonsense

technique and unhurried pacing, resulting in a gentle story of familial reconciliation that, bar an icky kiddie-fiddling reveal, does little to scare the horses.

With a cantankerous pa on one side and sexist employers on the other, Adams' role might seem the definition of thankless. But typically, the *Fighter* star gives it sass, smarts and sensitivity, going toe to toe with Eastwood with the same fieriness Hilary Swank displayed in *Million Dollar Baby*. Justin Timberlake, in contrast, strikes out as an ex-pitcher who woos Adams between innings. But what else could he expect from a film led by Hollywood's most alpha of males? **Neil Smith**

THE VERDICT Saluting both America's national pastime and its oldest working icon, *Curve* is a solid heart-tugger that plays with a straight bat when it comes to plot, character and message.

► **Certificate 12A Director** Robert Lorenz **Starring** Clint Eastwood, Amy Adams, Justin Timberlake, John Goodman, Matthew Lillard **Screenplay** Randy Brown **Distributor** Warner Bros **Running time** 111 mins



WHATEVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE?

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

BETTE DAVIS AND JOAN CRAWFORD legendarily sparred during filming of this 1962 psychological thriller that spawned decades of bunny-boilers. And it shows in the deliciously grotesque and antagonistic performances, the diva duo playing former child star siblings now grown old. Baby Jane (Davis) abuses her disabled sister Blanche (Crawford) while clinging to her past with a creepy psychotic zeal. *WHTBJ?* remains a masterclass in 'uglying up' and a relevant comment on the destructive nature of celebrity. Lohan, take note. **Jane Crowther**

► **Certificate 12A Running time** 128 mins

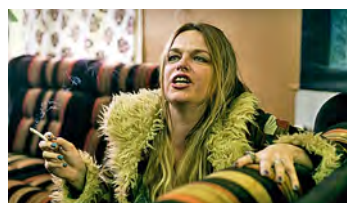


LOVE CRIME

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

AS SUGGESTED BY THE TITLE, A FILM of two halves. The first explores the ambiguous professional and personal relationship between two corporate executives at a multinational corporation, the ruthless Christine (Kristin Scott Thomas) and her diligent protégé Isabelle (Ludvine Sagnier). The second, meanwhile, is a flashback-heavy murder investigation. Already remade as Brian De Palma's *Passion*, this final film from late French director Alain Corneau is crisply shot and designed, yet despite the efforts of its female leads, feels oddly lacking in emotional impact. **Tom Dawson**

► **Certificate 15 Running time** 106 mins

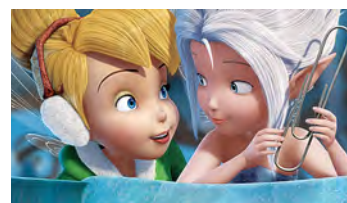


FALSE TRAIL

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

A BELATED SEQUEL TO ONE OF Sweden's biggest box-office hits (1996's *Jagärna*), this glum slice of Nordic noir – renamed and repackaged in a similarly tardy attempt to cash in on *The Killing* – sees Stockholm copper Rolf Lassgård return to his rural home town to investigate a young girl's brutal murder. His arrival does not sit well with hunting enthusiast Peter Stormare, for reasons that take a long time to become apparent in a film stocked with more atmosphere than action. "The truth always comes out, sooner or later," sighs one character midway through. Trust us: it's later. **Neil Smith**

► **Certificate TBC Running time** 129 mins



TINKERBELL AND THE SECRET OF THE WINGS

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

SIEVE THROUGH THE FAIRY DUST and there are some surprisingly hefty themes at play in Disney's latest Tinker 'toon. The story centres on Peter Pan's titular fairy friend, who frostbites her wings by venturing into the forbidden Winter Wood, (meeting characters voiced by Timothy Dalton, Anjelica Huston and Lucy Liu along the way). The set-up gives the filmmakers rein to comment on everything from global warming to cultural injustice. Lest it get too preachy, cute characterisations and kaleidoscopic visuals help the medicine go down. **Oliver Pfeiffer**

► **Certificate TBC Running time** 92 mins

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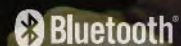
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She really was over packing in a big way.

West Of Memphis

★★★★★ Out 21 December Freedom the long way round...

DOCUMENTARY-MAKER AMY Berg doesn't do flashy – nor does she intrude herself into her films. She relies on newsreel, straight-to-camera interviews and the steady accumulation of testimony. But – as her debut, the 2006 *Deliver Us From Evil* about a paedophile Catholic priest, made clear – there's no lack of passion behind her sober methodology.

Her subject this time around is what became known as the case of the West Memphis Three (already the focus of Joe Berlinger's *Paradise Lost* trilogy). In May 1993, the bodies of three eight-year-old boys were found naked and hogtied in a ditch in West Memphis, Arkansas, covered in deep lacerations. Amid lurid allegations of a Satanic cult and on minimal evidence, three local youths were found guilty. One, Damien Echols, was sentenced to death, the two others to life imprisonment. It would take 18 years, and the unearthing of new evidence, before the WM3 could finally walk free. And even then, thanks to a bizarre anomaly of US law, they were still officially guilty....

Berg's involvement came via producers Peter Jackson and Fran Walsh, WM3 supporters who enlisted Berg in 2008 when new DNA evidence in the case came to light.

Though you'd think the *Paradise Lost* films would've covered every base, Berg's enthralling treatment makes her film look anything but redundant. In the first half we see the dogged erosion of the skewed prosecution case. The second half homes in on a man the filmmakers suggest as the real killer, stepfather of one of the victims.

There are clear parallels with Errol Morris' groundbreaking *The Thin Blue Line*, which likewise targeted a miscarriage of justice and fingered the real culprit – though here, for diverse reasons, we're never granted the same sense of closure. Nonetheless, Berg's film is inspiring, debate-rousing stuff. And in a banner year for documentaries, it more than holds its own against stiff competition. **Philip Kemp**

THE VERDICT A superbly detailed account of a notorious miscarriage of justice and how it was gradually unravelled. It's a tad overlong, but the passion, skill and revelations on display will captivate you.

► **Certificate 15** Director Amy Berg Starring Damien Echols, Lorri Davis, Jason Baldwin, Jessie Misskelley
Screenplay Amy Berg, Billy McMillin Distributor Sony
Running time 147 mins



WHEN SANTA FELL TO EARTH

★★★★★ Out 7 December

WATCH OUT, SOMEONE'S SPIKED THE eggnog. Cornelia Funke's festive kids' book is manhandled into a cheap German pantomime, complete with Dogtalian dubbing and the kind of frighteningly surreal plot that gives grown-ups waking nightmares. A shaggy young Santa is chased out of Christmastown by the dastardly Goblynch and his army of giant inflatable nutcrackers. Escaping to the real world in a flying caravan, Santa (along with his pet elves and an invisible reindeer) enlist the help of two kids to try and save Christmas. The filmic equivalent of a lump of coal. **Paul Bradshaw**

► **Certificate U** Running time 107 mins



ELECTRIC MAN

★★★★★ Out 29 November

IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN CLASSIC Simpsons episode 'Three Men And A Comic Book', the only surprise in this micro-budget Scottish comedy about two geeks who stumble upon a rare first edition is how it squanders its strong premise. As affectionate subculture satire, it's undone by dredging up every cliché about awkward, movie-quoting fanboys. As madcap adventure, it feels as though more care has been taken over the Electric Man comic's backstory than the plot; even a deftly handled bike chase can't compensate for the overall sluggishness. More geek creak than geek chic. **Simon Kinnear**

► **Certificate 12A** Running time 100 mins



YOSSI

★★★★★ Out 30 November

TEN YEARS AFTER WRITER-DIRECTOR Eytan Fox's *Yossi & Jagger*, the former (Ohad Knoller) is now a closeted Tel Aviv cardiologist, still mourning the fellow IDF soldier who died in his arms in battle. On a trip to Eilat, clutching his copy of Thomas Mann's *Death In Venice*, he encounters a young conscript (Oz Zehavi), at ease with his sexuality. It's a something of a rarity (and a relief) these days to watch a movie about a solitary male protagonist who isn't a nutjob killer, and this is a perceptive, warm-hearted work, anchored by Knoller's impressively less-is-more performance. **Tom Dawson**

► **Certificate 15** Running time 84 mins



TU SERAS MON FILS

★★★★★ Out 7 December

NIELS ARESTRUP (A PROPHET) PLAYS an arrogant winemaker, proud owner of a St-Emilion château, who despises his son as a talentless weakling. Instead he starts to groom the son of his estate manager, newly returned from California, to succeed him. Writer/director Gilles Legrand's study of fraught father/son relationships builds the tension, helped by a fine cast – especially Lorant Deutsch as the put-upon son, his face registering every slight – while the vineyards of Bordeaux offer a deceptively serene backdrop. The only downside is Armand Amar's over-explicit score, underlining every dramatic moment. **Philip Kemp**

► **Certificate TBC** Running time 97 mins



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SYNCHPOINT

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Alex Cross

★★★★☆ Out 30 November Along came a reboot.

JUST AS GEORGE WENDT IS Norm, now and forever, just as James Gandolfini remains a Soprano, years past his expiration date, so will Tyler Perry continue to be Madea (in the US at least), the excitable drag-granny that has made Perry one of the most successful actor/directors.

You can certainly see why he'd want to slip on some pants once in awhile, and given his box-office heft, you can also see why Hollywood would give a Perry-led thriller the green light. But *Alex Cross*? The homicide detective previously essayed by Morgan Freeman in icy-veined chillers *Kiss The Girls* (1997) and *Along Came A Spider* (2001)? From the outset, it seems like a casting session on acid. After watching it, it feels more like someone lost a bet. In this prequel-y reboot (based like the Freeman films on a novel by James Patterson), Cross is a Detroit detective on the hunt for a psycho serial torturer/murderer named Picasso (*Lost*'s Matthew Fox), who leaves Cubist charcoal drawings behind to confound the police. Things get personal when Picasso starts targeting Cross' family.

Together with his crime-busting buddy Tommy Kane (Ed Burns), our too-tall

detective hunts down his prey through the bleak wasteland of Motor City, quipping, grunting, and smashing into walls and doorframes as he goes. Director Rob Cohen is known for mindless mayhem – *xXx*, *The Fast And The Furious* and *The Mummy 3* – so it is entirely possible that *Alex Cross* was also *his* chance to spread his cinematic wings and tackle something more cerebral. That did not happen. *Alex Cross* is mostly chaos and disorder, and definitely not of the thinking-man's variety.

The problem here is that everyone involved is so unable to rise above each other's mediocrities that we are left with an expensive mush that's no better than any police procedural on TV. Tyler, put the dress back on. It's a much better fit. **Ken McIntyre**

THE VERDICT Miscast and underwritten, *Alex Cross* does not reinvent Tyler Perry, or James Patterson's character, or anything, really. The only appeal here is the sick kick of watching a franchise blow itself to bloody stumps.

► **Certificate 15** Director Rob Cohen **Starring** Tyler Perry, Matthew Fox, Rachel Nichols, Giancarlo Esposito, Jean Reno **Screenplay** Marc Moss, Kerry Williamson **Distributor** Entertainment **Running time** 101 mins



FIRST

★★★★☆ Out 26 November

IF THE BBC'S FIVE-DISC, 15-HOUR boxset doesn't satisfy your appetite for London 2012, there's always Caroline Rowland's official documentary: a heartfelt salute to the Olympic ideal, cut from the same cloth as the two shorts her company produced for the bid campaign. Following the mixed fortunes of 12 debut Olympians from around the world, it's a rollercoaster of triumph, heartbreak, elation and despair, with a few familiar faces (British cyclist Laura Trott, US swimmer Missy Franklin), plenty more you'd have difficulty recognising and rather too much Olly Murs on its soundtrack. **Neil Smith**

► **Certificate** TBC **Running time** 105 mins



STARBUCK

★★★★☆ Out 23 November

A VINCE VAUGHN REMAKE OF THIS French/Canadian comedy is already in the works – but just because it's about an amiable slacker whose past life as a serial sperm donor catches up with him, doesn't mean it's a gross-out affair. Instead, it's a sweet if schmaltzy crowd-pleaser as 'Starbuck' (Patrick Huard) secretly embroils himself in the affairs of his 533 biological children. It's too risk-averse to ask awkward questions but works as a wry satire of fatherhood. Huard's charm offsets the plots contrivances, while Ken Scott's finely balanced direction humanises the high concept. **Simon Kinnear**

► **Certificate 15** **Running time** 109 mins



NINJA SCROLL

★★★★☆ Out 23 November

RANKING ALONGSIDE AKIRA AND *Ghost In The Shell* as one of the most influential animes ever made, Yoshiaki Kawajiri's 1993 actioner gets a belated re-release in all its stylish, violent, uncult glory. In feudal Japan, a wandering rōnin rescues an assassin who reluctantly agrees to help him take down a band of supernatural samurai – led by the man he supposedly beheaded years before. Meticulously animated and gratuitously bizarre, it's probably the only place you can see a rapist rock monster going down on a topless ninja, or a naked snake-witch fighting a hunchback made of bees. **Paul Bradshaw**

► **Certificate 18** **Running time** 91 mins

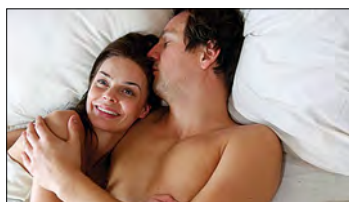


BARAKA

★★★★☆ Out 14 December

A SLEEPY MONKEY NODDING OFF segues into a solar eclipse – no, this isn't 2001: A Space Odyssey the remake, although it has similar pace and scope. Instead, Ron Fricke's 1992 documentary is a gorgeous travelogue shot in 24 exotic countries across 14 months on 77mm film stock, the idea being to map the interconnectivity between man and planet. In practice, this means stunning landscapes, scurrying cityscapes and naked people praying. Depending on your tolerance for the aforementioned it's either an awesome vision of the world in all its time-lapsed wonder or visual whale music. **Matt Glasby**

► **Certificate** PG **Running time** 97 mins



HAPPY HAPPY

★★★★★ Out now

THE HUNT FOR HAPPINESS IS miserable indeed, not least when it involves the seduction of your married neighbour. Such is the predicament Kaja (Agnes Kittelsen) faces in Anne Sewitsky dramedy debut when, weary of her chilly marriage, she cosies up to hunky Sigve (Henrik Rafaelsen). The ensuing drama is typically Scandinavian in the best way possible – the setting's beautiful, the tensions slow-burning. Meanwhile, musical interludes courtesy of a barbershop quartet lend a playful undertone. Sweet but never saccharine, *Happy Happy* is as delicate as Kaja and just as endearing. **Josh Winning**

➤ Certificate 15 (tbc) Running time 85 mins (tbc)



THE HOUSE I LIVE IN

★★★★★ Out 23 November

THE DISASTROUS SOCIAL/ECONOMIC consequences of America's 40-year-long 'war on drugs' are explored in Eugene Jarecki's informative and saddening documentary. Criss-crossing the States, and drawing on interviews with those personally connected to the criminal justice system, *THILL* persuasively argues that punitive laws against users have historically involved disproportionately targeting poor, non-white communities. One of the most incisive talking heads is *The Wire* creator David Simon: "What drugs haven't destroyed," he says, "the war against drugs has." **Tom Dawson**

➤ Certificate TBC Running time 105 mins

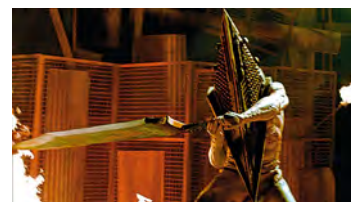


CINEMA KOMUNISTO

★★★★★ Out 23 November

WITH YUGOSLAVIA NO MORE, IT'S hardly surprising that its cinema isn't better known – but once it thrived. Mila Turajlić's doc resurrects an era where Hollywood stars appeared in propaganda pics, military service meant becoming an extra and dictator Marshall Tito's projectionist screened a new film nightly for three decades. Turajlić's tantalising thesis – that movies set the mood for Tito's virtual nation – is wry rather than rigorous; by avoiding difficult questions, it's in danger of looking facile. Yet the irreverence pays off in some gobsmacking anecdotes, all backed by archive footage. **Simon Kinnear**

➤ Certificate TBC Running time 100 mins (tbc)



SILENT HILL: REVELATION 3D

★★★★★ Out now

THANKS KONAMI: YOUR BEST GAME franchise dies a little more now that you've given the green light to this dog's breakfast of a film sequel. *Revelation 3D* takes the Sean Bean character from 2006's part one, turns him into Harry Mason from the first game and gives him an adopted daughter (Adelaide Clemens), who heads to Silent Hill when dad goes missing. The nurse-monsters look cool but the plot and burning fairgrounds are so OTT they dispel any chill factor. For all the exposition about ancient curses there's no lifting the one that videogame adaptations tend to stink. **George Bass**

➤ Certificate 15 Running time 94 mins



It was his first time
at the Rodeo.

Gambit

★★★★★ Out 21 November

Coen overboard.

I am here to amuse, sir!" says put-upon art curator Colin Firth to his "shitbag" employer in *Gambit*, a remake of the 1966 heist caper that sees the *The King's Speech* man step into the shoes, and spectacles, of one Michael Caine. Sadly, there's little that's amusing in this leaden, lethargic affair, based on a 10-year-old script by the Coen brothers that feels like a first draft at best.

True, there are flashes of the siblings' quirky wit on display: a Texas rodeo featuring dog-riding monkeys, for example, or a reality TV show about the morbidly obese called *Half Ton Man*. Check out too the Japanese translator whose servile fawning masks a mocking contempt for oblivious 'Whitey'. ("This guy is such a dick!" his subtitles read at one point. "Time to throw out some Zen.") Too often, alas, Michael Hoffman's film opts for clumsy slapstick – stranding Firth on a hotel balcony without his trousers, for instance, or having various characters punch him in the face for no good reason. Or else it's merely puerile, a scene involving a farting biddy lowering the tone to levels even *Viz* scribes would think beneath them.

The plot? Something to do with a fake Monet that Firth tries to get Alan Rickman's plutocrat to bid for with the help of Tom Courtenay's forger and a trailer-trash rodeo queen (Cameron Diaz). Standing in his way is Rickman's pet lion, various indignities and a fellow paintings expert (Stanley Tucci) with an exaggerated German accent.

Snazzy animated titles initially imply *Gambit* will be a sprightly screwball with elements of *Bringing Up Baby* and *The Pink Panther*. Sadly, what follows is more clueless than Clouseau, with only Rickman striking the right tone as a Murdoch-like tycoon with a yen for nudism. He certainly nails it when disdainfully dismissing the entire shenanigans as "a bit of a waste of time".

Neil Smith

THE VERDICT Jennifer Aniston, Ben Kingsley and P.J. Hogan are just a few of the names who have been attached to this project during its lengthy gestation. To judge from the half-baked results, they had a lucky escape.

➤ Certificate 12A Director Michael Hoffman Starring Colin Firth, Cameron Diaz, Alan Rickman, Tom Courtenay, Stanley Tucci Screenplay Joel Coen, Ethan Coen Distributor Momentum Running time 89 mins

Box office charts 08.10.12-04.11.12



SKYFALL

Biggest first week in UK box office history, fastest film to reach £50m, statue of Judi Dench to replace Eros... OK, the last one's a lie. But Brits have gone bonkers for Bond.



ARGO

The more money it takes, the more the Oscar buzz heats up for the escape-from-Tehran thriller. If it wins Best Picture, it'll be two years in a row for films you should file under 'Ar'.



WRECK-IT RALPH

Audiences liked it, critics liked it, and the games industry must be chuffed with a feature-length not-so-subliminal ad. But it's not out in the UK till Feb, which makes us shake our oversized fists.

UK TOP 10

POSITION	FILM	THIS MONTH	SINCE RELEASE	WEEKS OUT THERE
1	Skyfall ★★★★★	£53.4m	£53.4m	2
2	Madagascar 3: Europe's Most Wanted ★★★	£17.5m	£17.5m	3
3	Taken 2 ★★	£14.9m	£22.3m	5
4	Hotel Transylvania ★★★	£6.8m	£6.8m	4
5	Paranormal Activity 4 ★★★	£5.5m	£5.5m	3
6	Sinister ★★★	£4.6m	£6m	5
7	Looper ★★★★★	£4.3m	£9.7m	6
8	Frankenweenie ★★★	£1.5m	£1.5m	4
9	The Perks Of Being A Walflower ★★★	£1.3m	£2.1m	5
10	Silent Hill: Revelation 3D ★	£1m	£1m	1

US TOP 10

POSITION	FILM	THIS MONTH	SINCE RELEASE	WEEKS OUT THERE
1	Taken 2 ★★	\$76.2m	\$125.7m	5
2	Argo ★★★★★	\$75.9m	\$75.9m	4
3	Hotel Transylvania ★★★	\$61m	\$137.6m	6
4	Paranormal Activity 4 ★★★	\$49.6m	\$49.6m	3
5	Wreck-it-Ralph N/A	\$49.1m	\$49.1m	1
6	Sinister ★★★	\$44.4m	\$44.4m	4
7	Here Comes The Boom ★★	\$35.6m	\$35.6m	4
8	Pitch Perfect ★★★	\$28.5m	\$55.6m	6
9	Flight N/A	\$25m	\$25m	1
10	Looper ★★★★★	\$23.5m	\$63.7m	6



FLIGHT

Robert Zemeckis' first movie in 12 years not starring a glassy-eyed CGI avatar meets with approval Stateside. Also not here till February. Shut up February, hogging all the cool films!



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4

Slap on the wrist for the UK cinema that accidentally put this on instead of *Madagascar 3*, traumatising kids. Mind you, we'd take demonic possession over that miserable giraffe.



SINISTER

Like the same makers' *Insidious*, a scarier made for tuppence and turning a healthy profit. Our thesaurus reckons either 'Ominous' or 'Treacherous' could be next....

Flashback

ISSUE 77, 2004

ON THE COVER...

Your bank manager plus albino Milli Vanilli tribute act Milli Vanilla portend the coming of *The Matrix Reloaded*. Plus life-size Frodo, top right corner.



INSIDE...

The A-Z of *Reloaded*; 30 Things You Didn't Know About Steven Seagal (no. 20: he broke Sean Connery's wrist training him on *Never Say Never Again*).

Film of the month

X-Men 2: "Fans left licking their lips but undernourished by the original will now feel satisfied... bigger, bolder and better."

Not film of the month

Johnny English: "A Barclaycard ad dragged over 90 minutes. Hopeless and predictable."

In the news

Our highlight-by-highlight breakdown of the 75th Academy Awards: "3h 21m: Adrien Brody uses his Best Actor win as an excuse to slip Halle Berry the tongue."



Reviews just in!

Head to www.totalfilm.com for up-to-the-minute movie reviews

Nine Christmases ago, Peter Jackson bade a bittersweet farewell to Middle-earth. You could tell from the "We're going in 10 minutes, after this drink" style ending to *The Return Of The King* that he was loath to let go. And lo, the king has returned with *Bag-man Begins*, in which Tim from

The Office teams up with an old bloke and some violent gnomes to get their bling back from a dragon. What to expect from *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (13 Dec)? Lots of dwarf slapstick, a few fights with fat monsters, Elijah Wood in a Kevin Keegan wig. Plus the Gollum/Bilbo meeting 'Riddles In The

Dark' – which'll end up being 'Widdles In The Second Half' if you don't go beforehand, given how luxuriously long the film's sure to be. Elsewhere there's concert doc *Neil Young: Journeys* (14 Dec) and Miley Cyrus as a college-infiltrating agent in *So Undercover* (7 Dec). SO like 21 *Jump Street*.

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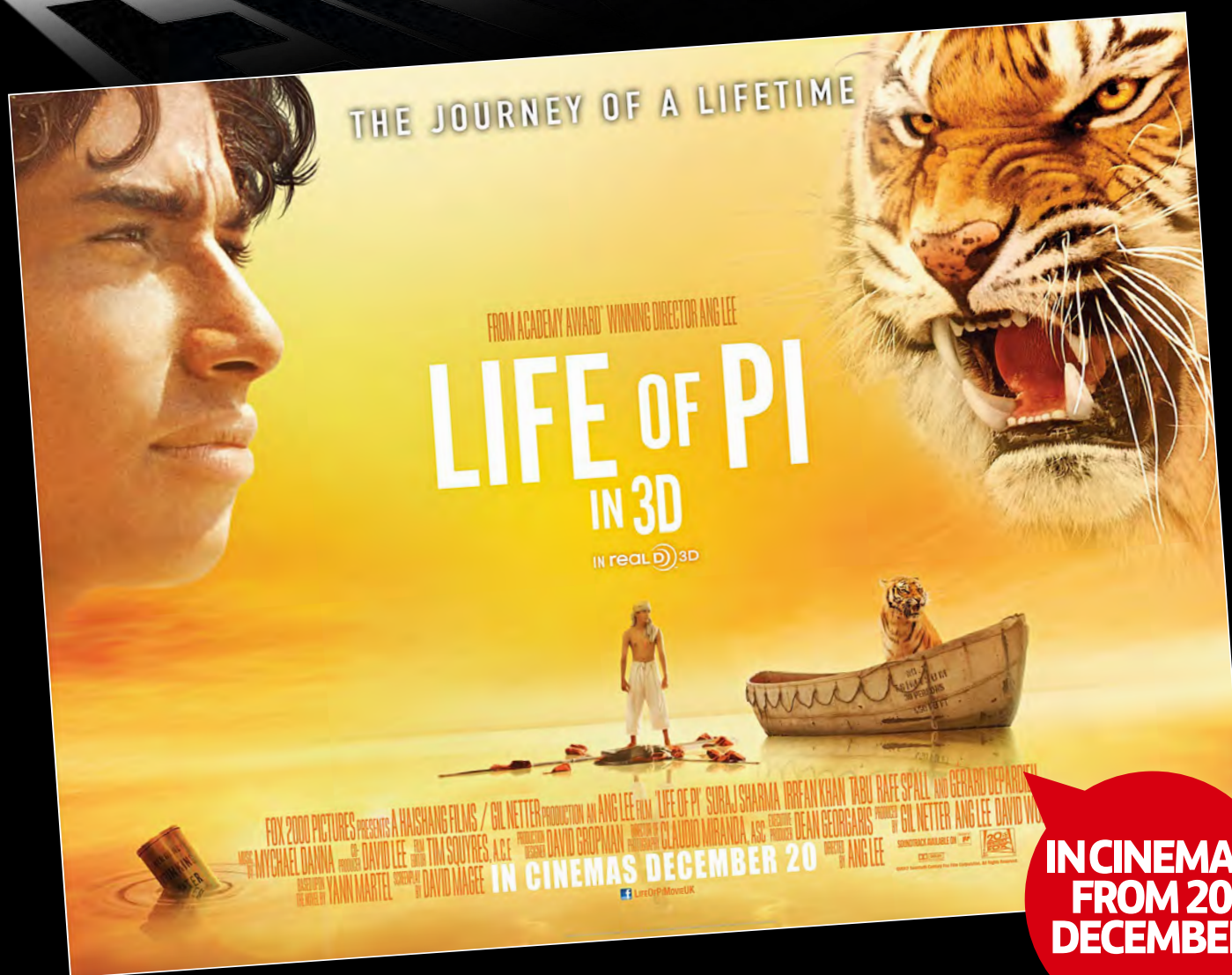
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SCREENING DETAILS

DATE OF SCREENING 11 December 2012 **TIME** 6 for 6.30pm

WHERE  **cineworld**
C I N E M A S

ABERDEEN Union Square 26 First Level Mall, Union Square, Aberdeen, AB11 5R
BIRMINGHAM 181 Broad Street, Birmingham, B15 1DA
BOLTON The Valley, 15 Eagley Brook Way, Bolton, BL1 8TS
BRADFORD Bradford Leisure Exchange, Vicar Lane, Bradford, BD1 5LD
BRISTOL Hengrove Leisure Park, Hengrove Way, Bristol, BS14 0HR
CAMBRIDGE Cambridge Leisure Park, Clifton Way, Cambridge, CB1 7DY
CARDIFF Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, CF10 2EN
CRAWLEY Unit 1, Crawley Leisure Park, London Road, Crawley, RH10 8LR
DUNDEE Camperdown Leisure Park, Kingsway West, Dundee, DD2 4TF
EDINBURGH Fountain Park, 130/3 Dundee Street, EH11 1AP
ENFIELD Southbury Leisure Park, 208 Southbury Road, EN1 1YQ
GLASGOW 7 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3AB
HIGH WYCOMBE Eden, Denmark Street, HP11 2DB
LIVERPOOL Montrose Way, Edge Lane Retail Park, Liverpool, L13 1EW
MILTON KEYNES Xscape, 602 Marlborough Gate, MK9 3XS
NOTTINGHAM The Corner House, 29 Forman Street, Nottingham, NG1 4AA
SHAFTESBURY AVENUE 13 Coventry Street, Piccadilly, London, W1D 7DH
SHEFFIELD Valley Centertainment, Broughton Lane, Sheffield, S9 2EP
WANDSWORTH Southside Shopping Centre, Wandsworth, SW18 4TF
WEST INDIA QUAY Hertsmere Road, West India Quay, London, E14 4AL
WOLVERHAMPTON Bentley Bridge Leisure Park, Wednesfield Way, WV11 1TZ
YEovil Old Station Way, Unit 1, Yeo Leisure Park, Yeovil

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Rosie Fletcher, Associate Editor

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There and back again:
Bilbo Baggins (Martin
Freeman) gets ready to go
on his unexpected journey.

WORDS MATTHEW LEYLAND

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

GOBLINS, GANDALF, GOLLUM...

PETER JACKSON HAS RETURNED TO MIDDLE-EARTH. WILL THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY BE THE START OF ANOTHER TRILOGY TO RULE THEM ALL? TF HEADS ON AN EPIC QUEST TO THE NEW ZEALAND SET...

Wug of tea in hand, cardigan unbuttoned, Peter Jackson looks very much at home. In a way, he is. *Total Film* is standing with him on the Kong stage – purpose-built for Jackson's 2005 great-ape remake – of Wellington's Stone Street Studios. A former paint factory, the eight-acre site also hosted production of *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy over a decade ago. Luckily, there's less outside disruption than there was back then. "We don't get so much airplane noise in the morning," smiles Jackson. "We've managed to sound-proof them slightly. But otherwise nothing's changed much, which is delightful. I'm really pleased."

TF doesn't doubt it, looking on as the director rocks around the set – half woodland, half greenscreen – like a benevolent general, mobilising actors, crew and scale doubles of every size and shape. Hobbit, dwarf or other, the latter are all as meticulously costumed and coiffed as the thespians they're standing in for, leaving the surreal impression that there are more Middle-earthlings than regular ones in the room. Equally, there's the sense of bearing witness to state-of-the-art, no-expense-spared blockbuster-making, and not just because the catering table makes Willy Wonka's workplace look like an understocked corner shop.

Above the treats is something else we want to take home with us: a 3D monitor

the size of a barn, allowing *TF* a close-up, deep-dish view of the leafy, cobwebby set as cameras get ready to roll. It's a moody Monday in September 2011: shoot day 85, roughly one third of the way through principal photography on *The Hobbit*, the Kiwi auteur's return to Tolkien. There's still a long, long way to go, but Jacko couldn't look less daunted. Probably because he's a world-class filmmaker who, with *The Lord Of The Rings*, overcame oliphant-sized odds, reaping a new legitimacy – not to mention bankability – for the fantasy genre. But it's also because he doesn't feel like he ever left Middle-earth. "You know," he says wistfully, "If we've got Gandalf or any of these returning characters on set it doesn't feel like 10 years have gone by. It really feels like we're still going!"

But what's it like for a newbie? "Sometimes you take a step back and go, 'Fuck, this is *The Hobbit*!'" laughs Martin Freeman. "It's obviously unlike any other film I've done in terms of scale; it's unlike any other film most people have done in terms of scale." The *Sherlock* star's appreciation of the enterprise's enormity seems apt, given that's he's Bilbo Baggins, a small Hobbit about to enter a much larger world in *An Unexpected Journey*. A world of wizards, goblins, trolls and... snot. "There's portions of snot," Freeman confirms. "There's portions of horrendous mud, and I'm sure there's lots >>



My precious: (main) Jackson and Freeman plot the journey; (right) Gollum returns; (above) action on-set.



'IT WAS STRANGE HEARING GOLLUM'S VOICE AGAIN. IT TOOK ME A COUPLE OF DAYS TO REALLY CONNECT WITH HIM'

ANDY SERKIS

more to come. I think I've just had the hors d'oeuvres." He's just come off set, where he's been involved in a sticky situation involving a river, a tree branch and some dangling. "The journey brings him out of his armchair, out of the comfort of Bag End, into a three-dimensional, real world. And he learns a lot about himself, and other people learn a lot about him as well."

Embarking on a mission to retrieve stolen gold with 13 baleful dwarves and a wizard, one of the perils Bilbo faces is prejudice. "I think [*the other characters*] judge him because of the way he looks, the way he carries himself, the way he dresses, the way he speaks," Freeman says. Yet, it's only a matter of time before Bilbo comes into his own. "A third of the way through, they know there's a lot more to him than meets the eye."

Freeman's schedule didn't begin at the beginning, but a key turning point: Bilbo's first encounter with Gollum. "It was the best way," he says. "Because those scenes were more interesting than just the technical stuff like looking through

a tree or walking along a track. All that stuff is great, but not as much as being in a nine-minute play with Andy Serkis." Yet Serkis himself admits that getting back under Gollum's grim skin wasn't easy. "It was very strange hearing his voice again and finding my way back into the character," he recalls. "At first I felt like I was doing a weird sort of impersonation of someone I once played. It took me a couple of days to really dig deep, really connect with him beyond a superficial level. I've never been through that before."

A

Perched in a canvas chair on a flora-filled set, Serkis enthuses about his own journey. "It came

another fresh experience for Serkis was directing second unit – after helming a videogame and a few shorts, *The Hobbit* marks his first time behind the camera on a major feature.

out of the blue," he says. "I was planning on coming down here for two weeks to be Gollum, and I got a big surprise when Pete said he wanted me to be second unit director." Serkis surmises that he got the gig because he understands the importance of performance – an aspect of *TLOT*R that never got lost among the beasts and battles. "Sometimes on second unit, performances aren't really taken into account because you're covering so many angles of the storytelling process," Serkis says. "What he probably saw in the idea of having me on board was that I would be able to provide a continuum for the actors, that I would be able to support their performances all the way through, being an actor myself."

Well-qualified to compare trilogies, he suggests that *The Hobbit* will have "greater range of tones" than *TLOT*R, "going from comedic to dramatic to quite dark". This first chapter will likely be the best place to look for laughs – especially dwarf-related ones. "We've had some really good times," Serkis says of the 13 actors



A GUIDE TO TOLKIEN HOW TO BLAG IT OUT IN THE PUB...

What's J.R.R. stand for? John Ronald Reuel.

He's English, right?

Er, no. Despite seeming like a quintessential British gent, Tolkien was actually born in South Africa in 1892. He moved to England after his father's death and grew up in Birmingham.

Didn't he write crap about goblins and stuff?

Detractors say his prose is overwrought and archaic, but enthusiasts point to his rich descriptions, detailed world-building and economic style. Most famous for writing *The Hobbit*, *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy and *The Silmarillion* (which explores the history, myths and legends of Middle-earth), he was also a highly esteemed Oxford Professor and scholar of languages.

Did he hang out with nerds?

Tolkien was in a group of fellow literary enthusiasts – which included Narnia creator C.S. Lewis – in a pub in Oxford. They called themselves The Inklings.

So how did this *Hobbit* malarkey all begin?

The author came up with the idea for *The Hobbit* while grading papers in the 1930s. He found a blank piece of paper and wrote its opening line: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit." Two years later he finished the book.

Did it get snapped up?

The Hobbit's manuscript was originally read by the publisher Stanley Unwin's 10-year-old son, Rayner, who passed this judgement on it: "This book, with the help of maps, does not need any illustrations. It is good and should appeal to all children between the ages of five and nine." The book was published by George Allen & Unwin publishers in 1937.

And was a hit, right?

Tolkien was quickly encouraged to write a sequel to his successful children's book, but he was so engrossed in the complex world of Middle-earth that he ended up taking a whopping 12 years to finally finish writing *The Lord Of The Rings*.

Was it popular?

Massively, particularly with members of the counter-culture community of the '60s and '70s. In his later years Tolkien and his wife would receive phone calls in the middle of the night from stoned hippies wanting to talk about Gandalf and co. The author was not impressed...

What does Tolkien's estate make of Jackson's films?

J.R.R. Tolkien died in 1973 and his legacy has fallen to his son, Christopher Tolkien, who has been editing and publishing his father's writing posthumously. Christopher also drew the maps for *The Lord Of The Rings* books. A recluse who lives in France, he's said of the *LOTR* trilogy: "They gutted the book, making an action movie for 15-25 year olds. And it seems that *The Hobbit* will be of the same ilk..." **JN**

of which part of Middle-earth we're from, what kind of work we did."

With 13 dwarves jostling – often literally – for screen time, creating points of difference was key. "I play Bofur who, along with Bombur and Bifur, form the Irish contingent," says James Nesbitt, who's out of costume but also prone to an impromptu croon ("*The Man In The Moon* – it's a dwarf drinking song"). "The three of us are a bit simple, not as interested in the idea of getting back the riches. They're out for an adventure. They don't mind a scrap. My character's the first to enter the bar and the last to leave – I wonder why they hired me?"

Initially worried by the prospect of having "13 Gimlis" running around, Jackson came to embrace the challenge of distinguishing dwarf from dwarf. "It's turned out to be one of the fun things," he says. "They've all got their characters, things they're developing as traits. [*Co-writers*] Philippa [*Boyens*] and Fran [*Walsh*] are day by day working up new dialogue for different dwarves, to keep the group alive. The size of the group is really making us write as we go almost, so that we can include all those small character moments."

While some were finding their characters, others were rediscovering them. Reintroducing Gandalf The Grey... "It was always our favourite character," reveals Sir Ian McKellen. "I mean, me and Peter Jackson, we always preferred 'Gandie', as we call him, Gandalf The Grey as opposed to Gandalf The White – he was a bit of stick, wasn't he?" Well, there was certainly less of a twinkle there – which has been fully restored for *An Unexpected Journey*. "There's more

fun and variety to Gandalf The Grey," offers McKellen, in person as warm as the tea he slurps between answers. His affection for 'Gandie' – and the franchise as a whole – is palpable. And one of the nice things about this film, he reckons, is that it plugs some of the Gandalf-gaps in the book. "In Tolkien's novel, you never discovered what Gandalf was up to every time he left the dwarves to get on with it," McKellen says. "But in the film, you do. You see why he's gone, what's on his mind, the context within which the quest takes place." It's all in aid of subtly building a bridge to Jackson's original trilogy. "Danger is looming, something is happening, everything is being disturbed – will the dwarves affect the situation?" intones McKellen, sounding not a million miles from his alter ego. "These are the preoccupations Gandalf has in the climax of the film – well, the third film." For now, there are good times to be had. "There's plenty of room for lightheartedness, and it's reflected in the casting of the film," he states. "Martin is just superb. A star is born..."

playing the treasure-hunters. "Particularly in the early scenes around the dinner table!"

TF gets a glimpse of the set-piece in question during a break in filming. Two things are clear: 1) how seamlessly the different-sized characters (Gandalf, Bilbo, the dwarves) interact; and 2) Martin Freeman's comic timing, as smooth as Bilbo is ruffled. High technology and good old-fashioned talent, working together to produce entertainment. And later on, we go one better with our own comedy scene round the dinner table. Over in the catering tent, we're granted an audience with four of the 13 dwarves – Nori (Jed Brophy), Oin (John Callen), Dori (Mark Hadlow) and Bifur (William Kircher) – in full big-nosed, plaited-beard regalia. Midway through the conversation, it's time for a sing-song: "Faaar ooover the misty mountains, to dungeons deep and caverns oooolld..." Stunt elves are staring. When the singing stops, Kircher offers insight into the character-building process: "From the outset, we developed characters along the lines

COVER STORY

Brilliant beasts: The goblins won't be winning any beauty contests.

'WE'RE GOING TO CREATE A DRAGON THAT'S MORE AWESOME THAN ANY DRAGON PREVIOUSLY'

PETER JACKSON

On set, Freeman tells us he's not feeling the pressure of playing the hero in such a hotly anticipated film. ("I really don't... other than the normal pressure I feel when I'm doing a play, or film.") Months later, with the hype engine pounding, he feels the same. Even now there are three films? "It's not really daunting," he says. "It is unexpected compared to where we were, but it's the same thing of telling the story and doing your bit, whether it's one or two or three films. There's just, you know, more of it! But there are so many of us involved, it doesn't really hang on anyone's shoulders."

"He's got a difficult role from the fact that the film sits on his shoulders," says Jackson (ha!). "The job with Bilbo is balancing the comedy and quirkiness with the drama, and that's what Martin is really superb at doing." When we meet Bilbo, he's the dictionary definition of a reluctant hero. "He really wants to be left alone, to put his feet up in front of a fire," explains Jackson. "He's never had a dwarf in his house before, and suddenly he's got 13 of them, raiding his pantry and eating his food, and he cares about food more than anything! And then suddenly he's dragged off on an adventure. So there's a lot of comedic opportunities. But you want to feel the truth of those moments. You don't want them to be played just for laughs. When he's holding the sword and faced with a troll, you want the sense of danger, and Martin's brilliant at juggling the tone, that ability to have one foot in the dramatic world and one in the comedic world. Bilbo is coming to life."

And at 48 frames per second, no less. So far, it's been the only real blight on the build-up: the mixed reaction to 10 minutes of 48 fps *The Hobbit* footage screened for exhibitors and press in April. Some were impressed; others thought it looked like a TV movie. Jackson put the more negative feedback down to the shock of the new, and the montage-style presentation: "A different experience than watching a character and story unfold". Andy Serkis also argues for immersion. "I think people have prejudged it," he says. "It'll be an acquired taste for some because we're used to the blur and flicker and romance of celluloid, but when you watch it within the context of the story you'll forget about it and become totally engrossed in the storytelling." Serkis promises "an enormous amount of depth" in the visuals. "With landscapes, scenes where you have a lot of depth and stacking, it's really chunky," he says. "And that combined with 3D makes you feel like you are literally stepping into it." Which is just what we want from a Tolkien movie – the same tactile, earthy feel that elevated *TLOTR* above the wispy weightlessness of so much fantasy cinema.

An *Unexpected Journey* may be in the can, but the filmmakers have some distance to go with the trilogy overall, with Freeman due to return to NZ in May to shoot pick-ups for parts two (*The Desolation Of Smaug*) and three (*There And Back Again*). "We're painting the canvas backwards," Jackson says. "Which Tolkien did himself. He wrote *The Hobbit* as a children's book and then *The Lord Of The Rings* came about 20 years later, and he developed a whole mythology that didn't exist when he wrote [the earlier book]." Jackson's elaborating on that mythology, adding

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

NOT ALL PREQUELS ARE CREATED EQUAL...

RED HOT

THE GODFATHER: PART II (1974)



Only half a prequel but that's still 100-odd minutes' worth. And Robert De Niro as a young Vito Corleone? Yes please.

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY (1966)



The last of the Dollars trilogy is set during the Civil War – before the other two. Watch Blondie assemble his iconic outfit...

TWIN PEAKS: FIRE WALK WITH ME (1992)



Beginning a year before Laura Palmer's death, David Lynch's mesmerising movie makes the TV show look like CBeebies.

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (1984)



Darker and, in places, more spectacular than *Raiders*, but also less disciplined. Takes place in 1935; *Raiders* is '36.

X-MEN: FIRST CLASS (2011)



Magneto and Xavier split as the Cuban Missile Crisis looms. Significantly stronger than *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

RED DRAGON (2002)



Ralph Fiennes is a decent Tooth Fairy but Brett Ratner's workmanlike *Silence Of The Lambs* prequel is no *Manhunter*.

EXORCIST: THE BEGINNING (2004)



Renny Harlin refs Father Merrin's pre-title bout with demon Pazuzu. Paul Schrader's prequel, *Dominion*, is better. Just.

STAR WARS: EPISODE 1 – THE PHANTOM MENACE (1999)



After a 16-year wait, Uncle George gives us Jar Jar, taxation and antiseptic CGI. Thank the stars for Darth Maul and his double-ender.

DUMB AND DUMBERER: WHEN HARRY MET LLOYD (2003)



It's back to high school with TV actors Derek Richardson and Eric Christian Olsen. Crass we can live with; crap we can't.

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE BEGINNING (2006)



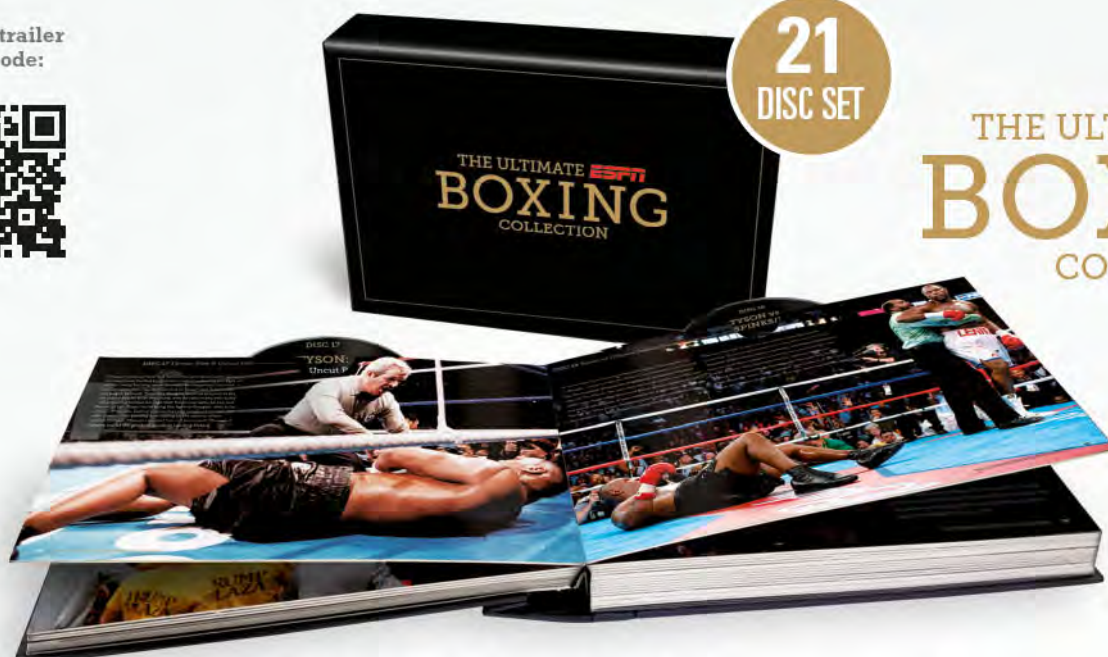
This pointless prequel to 2003's pointless remake offers pointless backstory. Leatherface was bullied as a boy, dontcha know. JG

ICE COLD



The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey opens on 13 December and will be reviewed in a future issue. For more features, go to totalfilm.com

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ONE TO WATCH

A woman with long, wavy brown hair is lying in bed, propped up on her left arm. She is looking off to the right with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a white, strapless garment. The bed has white pillows and a white sheet. The lighting is warm and soft.

HAPPY

THE SESSIONS

Sexual healing: Helen Hunt and John Hawkes share some pillow talk in *The Sessions*.

WORDS JAMES MOTTRAM

Passion and paralysis is the backdrop for the unlikeliest feel-good drama of the year in *The Sessions*. Could a romance between a man in an iron lung and his sex therapist be set for Oscar glory?

A man lies down on a motorised gurney, unable to move his body or even turn his head more than 90 degrees. Controlling his makeshift transport using a tube attached to his mouth and a wing mirror to see where he's going, he trundles along in the Californian sunshine, towards the prestigious Ivy League institution that is UC Berkeley. Not your everyday sight. But then, as you soon discover watching *The Sessions*, Mark O'Brien is not your everyday sort of person.

"He was, in his time, a poster boy for independent living. I wanted to make that point up front," says director Ben Lewin, explaining why he began this extraordinary biopic with such jaw-dropping real footage of O'Brien, a quadriplegic since polio damaged his nervous system when he was 6 years old. His rare outings aside, such was the severe curvature of his spine, he spent much of his life encased up to his neck in an iron lung, an almost medieval-looking 640lb cylinder that forced air into his lungs. >>

ENDING?

ONE TO WATCH



Time to think: (clockwise from above) Father Brendan (William H. Macy) with Mark O'Brien (John Hawkes); sex surrogate Cheryl Cohen Greene (Helen Hunt); behind the scenes.

Wedge into his chair, it's not hard to see why the stocky, Australian-raised Lewin was drawn to O'Brien. As a child, he also contracted polio, a disease that attacks the muscles and accounts for why – even now, aged 66 – he has a pair of crutches resting by his side. “My own personal history has been one where I’ve been in denial about my own disability,” he says, a statement backed up by the fact that, against the odds, he’s carved out a 37-year career in the industry, directing everything from documentaries to episodes of *Ally McBeal*.

Now he has, to borrow the title of his 2003 non-fiction film about LA’s jewellery trade, Hollywood gold in his hands. *The Sessions* took the Audience Award at this year’s Sundance Film Festival, while the ensemble cast – led by John Hawkes as O’Brien – were given a Special Jury Prize for their performances. Oscar talk is already bubbling for a film that may yet emerge as this year’s *The Artist*, the indie underdog that bests the studio big-hitters. “I’m such a naïve player in that regard,” sighs Lewin. “I try not to even think about it because I find it stressful.”

Still, even winning an Academy Award would pale next to the achievements of O’Brien, who graduated from Berkeley to become a renowned poet and journalist, tapping out his thoughts on a computer with a pencil in his mouth. “I loved discovering Mark’s poetry,” smiles Hawkes, the whiskery, 53-year-old, Oscar-nominated actor from *Winter’s Bone* who – if there is any justice – will likely be gearing himself up for a busy time this awards season.

Only able to act with his face, his is one of the most technically challenging turns since Javier



Bardem played the paralysed Ramón Sampedro in *The Sea Inside*. “I wanted to embody Mark’s being,” he explains. “His voice was an important part of that. I wanted the character to affect the audience, but more importantly I wanted Mark’s surviving friends and family to feel like they were seeing him on screen. I wanted them to connect with him through me. I wanted to be able to connect with them. It was important to me that they felt they were seeing the real Mark.”

Unable to meet O’Brien – he died in 1999, aged 49 – Hawkes had a wealth of resource material, including his subject’s book *How I Became A Human Being and Breathing Lessons*, Jessica Yu’s

1996 film about O’Brien that – in a possible foreshadowing of events to come – won an Oscar for Best Documentary Short. But reading and watching was no substitution for inhabiting this unique character. “Mark’s body was ravaged in a very specific way – the way his spine was bent, the way he had to be positioned – and I had to find the details in that, those truthful details about his life experience.”

Still, *The Sessions* is more than just a film about a severely disabled man and his literary achievements, as remarkable as they were. Back in the late ’80s, at the age of 38, the devoutly Catholic O’Brien set out to achieve what many



would've thought impossible: lose his virginity. To do so, it took the help of an equally remarkable woman, Cheryl Cohen Greene – a so-called 'sex surrogate' who helps her disabled clients explore erotic desire by, well, going to bed with them.

Let's be clear about this: Greene may accept money for her work, but this is not prostitution. "To be a prostitute, rule number one is that you mustn't care about the client," says Lewin, who first encountered O'Brien's story just over five years ago, when he read his article *On Seeing A Sex Surrogate*. "If anything, you should have contempt for the client. But being a sex surrogate, it's the very opposite – you really are concerned about the client and you're doing something positive for them and helping them to move on with their lives."

Even Lewin admits when he first met Greene, he was in doubt about her profession. Until, that is, she presented a well-ordered set of notes on O'Brien, detailing their time in clinical detail. "That made it perfectly clear to me," he says. "Hookers don't keep these sorts of notes!" And while a prostitute wants repeat business, Greene – whose modus operandi is to "explore the idea of touch" – limits her time with a client to a finite number of sessions, to prevent any emotional attachment.

And it's here, as O'Brien and Greene's lives intersect, that *The Sessions* is born – a tender relationship drama rendered with humanity and humour. "That's what's new about this 'love story' – two people coming together for one of them," says Helen Hunt, who plays Greene.

'What I'm hoping is that it pushes the envelope about discussing sex'

BEN LEWIN (DIRECTOR)

Sitting in London's Soho Hotel, knitting a doll for her eight-year-old daughter Makena, Hunt seems in awe of the real Greene. "She's a grandmother/cancer survivor/sex surrogate – she's a rock star!"

Lewin concurs. "On the face of it, she's a middle-class soccer mom representing good old American family values. And on the other hand, she does this very unconventional job and walks this emotional tightrope." This is just one of the taboo topics that *The Sessions* explores, frankly, unashamedly and positively. "I think that what I'm hoping," adds the director, "is that it pushes the envelope a little bit about discussing sex, which is even less discussed than disability – particularly in America."

It's a noble ambition, one that Hawkes agrees with. "I see myself as a sex positive person. 'Sex positive' is a term Cheryl Cohen Greene uses when discussing her work. I want us to get beyond the puritanical notion that our bodies are something to be ashamed of or embarrassed about." Still, judging by Hunt's reports of Greene's experiences, not all of society is ready to accept someone using their body as an intimate, therapeutic tool. "She says she's gone to seminars and people are yelling out, 'Whore!'"

Given all this, you might think a film – originally titled *The Surrogate* – about the sexual desires of a disabled man and the woman that helps him realise them would be box-office poison. Not surprisingly, Lewin and his producer wife Judi Levine got no funding from the industry, instead soliciting help from family and friends. "It's pointless," he says. "You might as well bang your head against a wall for the rest of your life to try and get the business involved in an interesting movie."

But when Hawkes and Hunt came on board, the project gained traction.

"I didn't have any reservations. I closed the final page of the script and said, 'That's beautiful. I want to be in that movie,'" says Hunt, who had previously starred in 1992's superficially similar *The Waterdance*, in which her character is embroiled in an affair with an author, paralysed after a hiking accident. While that film required her to be "pretty darn naked", it's not quite as exposing as her work here.

Before *The Sessions*, "My vagina has never been in a movie, if we're going to go there," she says, with a wry smile. So was she nervous? "I certainly was not super-human and without any nerves about feeling exposed or judged for being a naked person," she says. "But whatever fears I had were smaller than my desire to be in it." The only imbalance in the movie, notes Hunt, is that Greene is shown to be more naked than O'Brien. "I think that Ben felt if he showed [O'Brien's] penis, it would often be erect, and that's a whole other movie."

The Sessions is smart enough to realise going there would've saddled it with an NC-17 – the US rating that usually means few cinemas will play it (and arguably persuaded Academy members against awarding *Shame* any Oscar nominations). But before the movie sinks in a morass of awards-hype, Hunt sounds a note of caution. "I've been nominated for exactly nothing so far. What can I say? If this movie got that kind of attention, given that it was paid for by the friends and family of the director, given that it's about sex but isn't at all salacious, that would be good for everybody."

While Lewin acknowledges that *The Sessions* "does resonate with disabled people", he doesn't want to the film to spearhead a pro-disabled campaign. "The last thing I see myself as is a social prophet," he says. "I don't think I'm going out and changing people's attitudes. I don't see a tidal wave of change. Disabled people have been treated in such diverse ways – in reality, in literature and in cinema." Perhaps what makes *The Sessions* work is that it treats O'Brien with a normality that he doubtless craved. "There isn't a monotone about it," nods Lewin. "Life is full of disabled heroes and heroines." **TF**



The Sessions opens on 18 January and will be reviewed next issue. For the latest features, check out totalfilm.com

DOUBLE DOUBT

The horror, the horror:
(top) Chloë Grace Moretz
as *Carrie*; (bottom) a
demon from *Evil Dead*.

WORDS TARA BENNETT

WHY CARRIE AND EVIL DEAD COULD SHOCK EVERYONE BY PROVING THAT HORROR REMAKES REALLY CAN ROCK...

Compared to the dry spell that was the first half of the '90s (before *Scream* resurrected the genre), horror is booming right now. The only problem is, too many of the genre's offerings – at least those that make it to the multiplex – are remakes, sequels and sequels to remakes.

Over the last decade, damn near every recognisable title of the '70s and '80s has been remade or rebooted: *Dawn Of The Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween*, *Friday The 13th*, *A Nightmare On Elm Street*, *The Hitcher*, *The Fog*, *I Spit On Your Grave*, *The Amityville Horror*, *The Omen*, *The Last House On The Left*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, *The Wicker Man*, *When A Stranger Calls*, *Prom Night*, *The Thing*... Most, pretty much all, have been driven by commercial considerations only, exhibiting zero affection for the genre.

Which is exactly why we should be excited by the *Carrie* and *Evil Dead* remakes, both landing in early April.

The former is being reimagined by Kimberly Peirce, meaning it not only promises a woman's take on a female-slanted story (bullied teen hits puberty, watches her telekinesis sprout) but the care of a highly skilled, serious filmmaker (*Boys Don't Cry*, *Stop-Loss*). The latter comes with the full blessing of Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert and Bruce Campbell, the team behind the original cabin-in-the-woods classic. The (un)holy trinity have overseen the project every step of the way and, if what Campbell tells us is true, is much more interested in brown-panting hardened fans than playing to the widest possible audience. Bring it.

ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY GORDON HOLMES

>>



Troubled teen: (main) Julianne Moore as Carrie's mum; (above) telekineses in action; (below) Chloë Grace Moretz and Sissy Spacek as Carries new and old.

CARRIE

OK, there are plenty of horror films that could use a good remake, but there are also some that are sacrosanct. Like Brian De Palma's stylish, soulful adaptation of Stephen King's debut novel, *Carrie*. So good it had King admitting it improved on his source material, it benefited from De Palma's super-suspenseful direction and Sissy Spacek's haunted, wide-eyed performance as a telekinetic teen bullied by her peers and oppressed by her God Squad mom (Piper Laurie).

So why mess with perfection? Producer Kevin Misher is frank in his answer. "It's been just about 40 years since the book, so actually, generationaly, it's a movie that's about high school students, and high school students don't really know it," he points out. "From a purely business perspective, you have a movie about teens that can speak to a new teen audience. On the other hand, you have a nostalgic audience which has very fond affection for the original movie and the book, [and that] represents a real opportunity both creatively and economically."

That 'nostalgic audience' won't be comforted by Misher's words. But they will be comforted by the fact that the sickeningly talented Chloë Grace Moretz is playing Carrie White, Julianne Moore is playing her mother and Kimberley Peirce (*Boys Don't Cry*, *Stop-Loss*) is directing... after getting De Palma's blessing.

"I called him," she tells *Total Film*. "I told him how much I loved and respected him, and I asked him what he thought I should do. He said I should do it. It was important to me that I didn't step on someone else's territory."

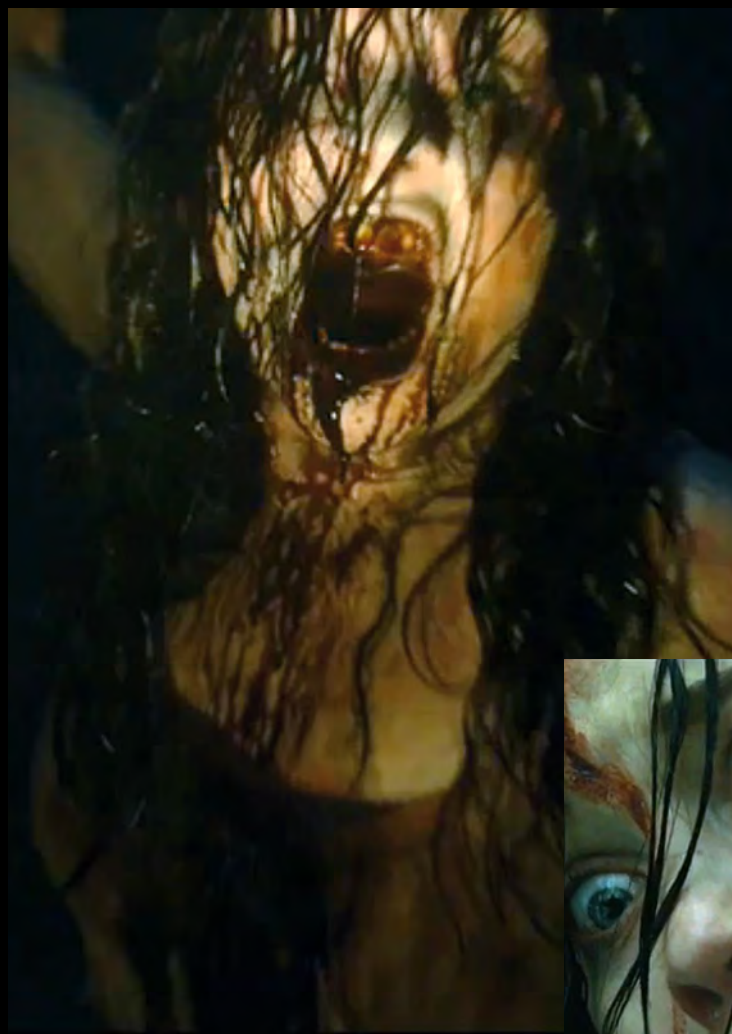
'THE MOTHER/DAUGHTER STORY IS THE HEART AND SOUL OF CARRIE'
KIMBERLEY PEIRCE

Peirce then adds, "I really, deeply, honestly, 100 per cent fell so in love with King's writing and with his characters. I love that it's such a richly psychological book. It's so dense. I took a page out of the novel to really make it a mother/daughter story. Carrie is your protagonist but the mother/daughter story is the heart and soul."

One thing's for sure, we can expect the *Carrie* remake to come with a tweak of perspective.

"Look, I have a mother and I've been at war with my mother," Peirce smiles. "Not that a man can't have that kind of relationship, but most women have an overly incestuous relationship with their mother and that's what's going on here with Carrie and Margaret (Julianne Moore). I certainly bring that to this [film], and I know what it's like to be a disempowered girl and come into my power as a woman."

So being a female director gives her an advantage? Peirce is cautious, offering, "Let's just say that any good director can do a great job, so I don't have a monopoly on that. But if you do know something about a character, you always find what you know. I do know the experience. I also know how girls act and get along with each other. I know how women use power too."



In the woods: (main and above) the new demons of *Evil Dead*; (below left) Jane Levy as Mia; (below right) the poster for Sam Raimi's 1981 original.

EVIL DEAD

In the 30 years since Sam Raimi, Rob Tapert and Bruce Campbell unleashed hell in *The Evil Dead*, that inventive, kinetic, DIY classic has lost some of its lustre. Even hardcore fans have to begrudgingly admit that time hasn't been kind to its many, many scares – hard to believe now that it was banned on video in the UK for 14 years – and its two sequels often leave many remembering the entire *Evil Dead* franchise as more comedic than horrifying.

For those reasons and more, Campbell tells *Total Film* that they finally put their sequel plans to rest in favour of reminding the faithful, and introducing a new generation, to exactly how disturbing an *Evil Dead* movie can be. Campbell is deadly serious when he says *Evil Dead* 2013, produced by the original creative trio and directed by newcomer Fede Alvarez, is out to terrorise. "It scared the hell out of us the first time we saw it," he promises. "It's a fucking violent movie. How about a nail-gun fight? How does that sound, like with lots of nails? Or how about blood rain? Anybody ever been caught in a blood rain? Well, you will be in this."

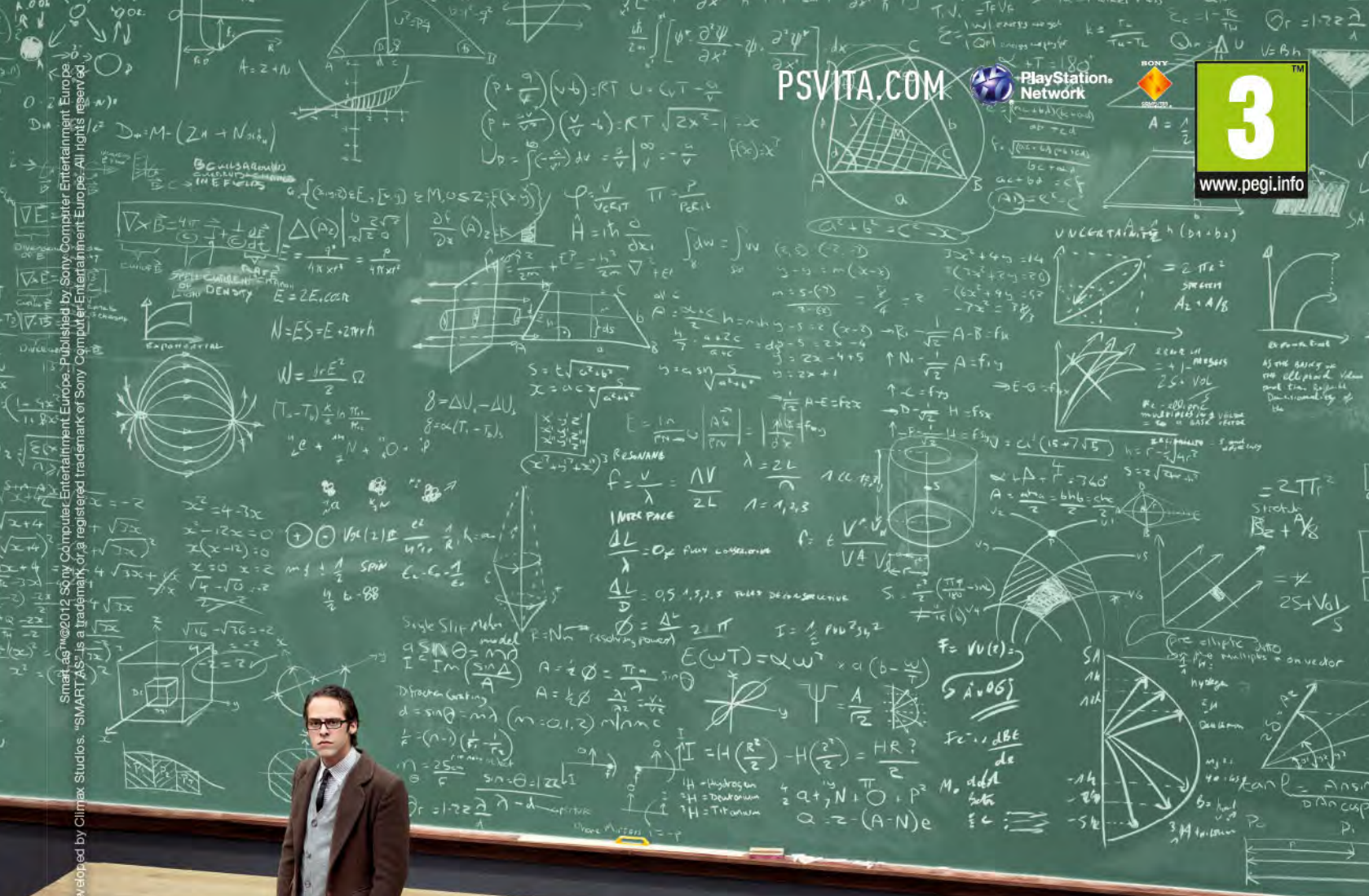
Campbell says it's a testament to the strength of Alvarez's contemporary take on the original that this remake got made. "Sam ran into Fede and they were developing something completely different, which got bogged down," he recalls. "But Fede was a big *Evil Dead* fan and pitched a couple of ideas that Sam thought were very interesting, then myself and Rob Tapert started to pay attention." Campbell's eyes widen. "He pitched a full-length story and we really liked it. He wrote a script and we kept liking it. It sort of grew on us like a wart. Plus, when you

see the chances of making a sequel receding every year, like our hairlines, you realise maybe we should get a new punk in here with five new kids to torment. We can use our experience to help guide the filmmaker to come up with a new balls-out movie that will torment people for the rest of their lives. We think he did it!"

While the new film will also take place in a cabin in the woods with the Book of the Dead hiding in the basement, this time there's no Ash. Instead there's Jane Levy's Mia, a heroin addict that needs to get off the smack. "It's like when interventions go bad. That should be the tagline for the movie," Campbell snarks. "We thought it was pretty organic that the lead chick is trying to shake a little habit. She goes back to the family cabin where she can be with her friends and scream it out for a couple of bad days. The problem is, by the time things get too far along, they think she's only in withdrawal. They don't realise it's a little worse than that and by then they can't stop it..." **TF**

**'WE WANT TO MAKE
A MOVIE TO TORMENT
PEOPLE FOR THE REST
OF THEIR LIVES'
BRUCE CAMPBELL**

Carrie opens on 5 April. Evil Dead opens on 13 April. Both will be reviewed in a future issue of *Total Film*. For more go to totalfilm.com



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THIS IS FORTY

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THE HEAT

CUBAN FURY

AND THE BEST OF BRITISH COMEDY

The unstoppable

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WORDS JENNY COONEY CARILLO

family portrait

Judd Apatow is back with his real and extended kin for mid-life crisis comedy *This Is 40*. Total Film is welcomed into the fold...

Usually when we trudge onto a film set the director is the toughest person to pin down. Too busy answering questions, guiding performances and overseeing everybody from the grip to the DoP to find time for an interview. Often we're huddled round a video monitor miles away from the actual action, told repeatedly via on-set publicists that the director has no time to chat. Not so with the super-relaxed, accommodating Judd Apatow. "This is a good spot to sit so you can see what's happening," says the affable 44-year-old when he greets *Total Film* at a sunny location in

El Segundo for his latest comedy, *This Is 40*. Apatow is filming at a restaurant a few minutes' drive from Los Angeles Airport and he's guided *TF* over to some bar stools next to the counter, providing a ringside seat as Paul Rudd, Leslie Mann, Annie Mumolo and Robert Smigel perform a dinner scene. Surrounded by extras at other tables, they're contentedly chowing down when one of their children approaches from the nearby kids' table – he has to poop and it really can't wait. Apatow and the actors try it a few different ways, huddling between takes to discuss, and there's always a lot of laughter. The relaxed atmosphere may have something to do with the fact Leslie Mann is married to Apatow, and the kids in the movie are played by their

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Let them eat cake: Iris Apatow, Maude Apatow, Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann celebrate middle age.







own children, Maude, 13 (now a Twitter star), and Iris, 8. But that's only part of it.

"I like to direct in a very loose way so that something can happen on the set every day," he says, sidling up to the counter between takes. "We prepare a lot in advance and the things you see us doing out there have already been discussed, so it may look relaxed, but believe me, we're not just going crazy out there!"

A sort-of-sequel

For *This Is 40*, the writer/director/producer/mogul has expanded the story of supporting characters Pete (Paul Rudd) and Debbie (Leslie Mann) from the 2007 hit *Knocked Up*. It's now five years later and Debbie is hitting the big 4-0, triggering her desire to change every area of their life, from exercise and diet to parenting and sex.

The warm, funny cadence of the humour is Apatow at his best, not surprising as he acknowledges the film is inspired by his own struggles in becoming a maturing husband and dad. "I never thought about [*making a sequel*]

when we were making *Knocked Up*," he insists. "I was just trying to think of something about mid-life crises and families, and these are my favourite people to do it with," he shrugs.

Despite rumours that Katherine Heigl and Seth Rogen might make cameo appearances, Apatow says that was never discussed. "Those characters are acknowledged a bit, but it's meant to be five years later and they're in their own space now," he says. "It's a bit like *Get Him To The Greek* after *Forgetting Sarab Marshall*; it was just another chapter, a side-step to this."

Playing to a slightly older demographic might not seem like an obvious choice for the man who's become a comedy brand producing or directing films like *Superbad*, *Anchorman*, *Pineapple Express* and *Bridesmaids*. "But it's important to me not to play it safe," he explains. "They aren't making a lot of human comedies these days and if they do, the budgets are usually very small, so I don't take it lightly that I'm allowed to do this."

Apatow recruited a combination of actors he's worked with before – Mann, Rudd, *Bridesmaids* actress/writer Annie Mumolo and stars Chris

'I wasn't a big fan of Paul Rudd. When I saw *Clueless* I just wanted to punch him' JUDD APATOW

O'Dowd and Melissa McCarthy – plus actors from his wish list: Albert Brooks as Pete's father, John Lithgow as Debbie's estranged Dad and Megan Fox as Debbie's ditzzy dress shop employee. Mrs Apatow was chuffed with the results. "I wrote a part for Albert Brooks and just prayed he'd like it," Apatow smiles. "One day Leslie came home and said, 'In the middle of a scene I looked at him and thought, 'he's the guy from *Broadcast News*!'" Mann also encouraged him to cast Megan Fox after the pair saw her host *Saturday Night Live*. "Leslie insisted, 'We



Keeping it in the family: (main) Leslie Mann checks her lines with off-screen husband and writer/director Judd Apatow; (clockwise, from above) Paul Rudd with long time *Saturday Night Live* star Robert Smigel; with *Bridesmaids* alumnus Chris O'Dowd; with on-screen wife Mann.

have to work with her, she's hysterical!" Apatow recalls. "Megan is a really interesting girl with a funny point of view. If she really wanted to, she could be one of the great comic actresses."

Scene nailed, lunch is called and Rudd and Mann amble over to our counter to join Apatow for a bite to eat. Immediately the trio start to joke about Rudd being Apatow's alter ego on screen, husband to his wife and father to his daughters. "He fits right in," Mann grins mischievously. Apatow shrugs, adding, "Leslie doesn't even notice it's not me! Now I'm having him make love to my wife, so it becomes a form of therapy!"

Joking aside, Apatow admits he was initially nervous casting his family again. "When these movies start, I'm always thinking, 'what's going to happen when we shoot? How is the family going to get along?' But it's a real joy to be around my children at work and to direct Leslie and have her surprise me every day."

"I love the family and I also feel like now I've gotten to know the kids," Rudd adds over salad. "Maude and Iris were only eight and three in *Knocked Up*. It's cool, talking to them now."

Though they're tight now, Apatow confesses his friendship with Rudd wasn't always on the cards. "I wasn't a big fan of Paul," he says bluntly. "In fact, when I saw *Chueless*, I wanted to punch him. Later, I realised he was brilliant – but I didn't even want him to come in when he read for *Anchorman*. But he was hysterical, I fell in love instantly and we haven't been separated since!"

A man who was Adam Sandler's roommate and once vowed to include a penis in every movie, Apatow now seems to have mixed feelings about his reputation for raunchy humour. "I think we're all man-children" he says with a slightly sheepish shrug. But is this a conscious shift to the fortysomething audiences? "There's less cock jokes..." He thinks for a moment. "Well, not that many less! We're talking about the real issues that we bring into our relationships. I think the point of all these stories is that it's hard on women to deal with these types of guys, but because Paul's character is so likeable some people are thinking, 'the woman is so hard on the guy' when they really should be thinking, 'wait, he's wrong – he's causing all of this!'"

It's that mixture of sauce and sweetness that makes Apatow one of the most influential comedy filmmakers in the industry, but he's resigned to being a bridesmaid during awards season.

"I thought maybe even this movie would be a little more dramatic but once I started shooting, I just saw the humour in most situations. No matter how harsh it is, that's where I land."

That's not to say he hasn't enjoyed some pinch-me moments. "We were invited to the AFI luncheon one year because *The 40-Year-Old Virgin* was somehow on their list of the 10 movies of the year, so I got to see Stephen Spielberg watch my clip. I remember they showed a clip of *Crash*, and then a clip of my film with Steve Carell getting a boner and I thought, 'that's the worst progress of clips possible!' But I don't think that lack of serious recognition will ever change. It's just not bred into you as a comedian. At this point I've stopped worrying about my rewards and just worry about being funny." **TF**



This Is 40 opens on 14 February. For more news and features check out totalfilm.com



funny girls!

Appearing together in *Pitch Perfect* this December, meet the women who are making comedy sing...

Rebel Wilson

The Aussie *Bridesmaids* alum who's coming to America.

Some actors were born with the urge to perform; others say it was a role in the school play that awakened their vocation. Trust Sydney-born Rebel Wilson to have a way better story. "I was in hospital getting treated for Malaria and I had this hallucination for about two weeks that I was an actress... I won an Academy Award and instead of giving an acceptance speech, I gave an acceptance rap, which was very new and people really liked it."

Those mischievous eyes! That slightly ajar mouth! Wilson's trademark is a facial expression that suggests she's always in on the joke, whether or not she's also the butt of it (and being 'plus-size' in diet-obsessed Hollywood, can mean you often are).

It says something about Wilson's obvious talent then that casting directors seem to have only recently noticed her body shape. When

Wilson read for a character called "Fat Amy" in upcoming a capella comedy *Pitch Perfect*, vanity didn't come into it. "Some actresses would be like 'ooh, I am not playing that character', but I just looked at the comic potential and thought, 'Man, but I think that will be the funniest character,' so I really wanted to play it."

A writer/performer in the tradition of Tina Fey, Wilson has been a massive TV star in her native Australia for years. "The moment I came to America and started getting cast, they're like 'Rebel's our golden girl. We love her. We always knew she'd be great.'" She got her Hollywood

'I had this hallucination for about two weeks that I was actress. I won an Academy Award and gave an acceptance rap'

break in 2011 playing Kristen Wiig's British privacy-invading roomie in *Bridesmaids*. The accent might have been a bit dodgy, but the delivery was spot-on (best line: "I did not know it was your diary, I thought it was a very sad, handwritten book"). She booked five movies the week *Bridesmaids* came out and the phone hasn't stopped ringing since.

We're very excited about her self-penned TV sitcom, *Super Fun Night*, in which she'll star as one of three friends determined to make every Friday night memorable. There's also a part opposite Mark Wahlberg and Dwayne Johnson

in Michael Bay's upcoming 'roid rage action comedy, *Pain And Gain*, which even promises her a bit of stunt-work. "When I first came [to America] I was really happy just to be in one movie," says Wilson. "Now I'm like oh, yeah, I would love to win some awards." Sounds like she should get that acceptance rap ready.

Elizabeth Banks

On looking nice and acting funny.

It's the great tragedy of Elizabeth Banks' career that she wasn't born funny-looking. "I'm genetically blessed," she sighs. "I'm working from a decent foundation of bone structure." It's testament to her determination, however, that she hasn't let this setback stop her from acting funny.

December sees the release of *Pitch Perfect*, a *Best In Show*-esque competition comedy with dog shows replaced by a capella singing contests. Banks co-produces and also plays a commentator with a nice line in inappropriate gags. It's yet another choice part to add to a CV that includes a title role in Kevin Smith's *Zack & Miri Make A Porno* and that bath scene in *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*. Banks is unapologetic about nabbing it. "My character was written for Kristen Wiig but her schedule couldn't do it. When we saw other actresses, I just felt I would do a better job."

While the likes of Kristen Wiig, Lena Dunham and Tina Fey have made comedy careers from subverting the idea of 'lady-like' behaviour, Banks has a different schtick. She takes that least hilarious of female movie stereotypes – the confident leading lady – and plays it for laughs.

Take poodle-coiffed PR bitch Effie Trinket, a role she'll reprise in next year's *The Hunger Games* sequel. Banks' well-judged performance was an essential ingredient in transforming the film from standard-issue teen flick to multi-layered satire. Or Avery Jessup in *30 Rock* – Jack Donaghy's well-groomed, conservative girlfriend is the anti-Liz Lemon, but still hilarious, and Banks has the Emmys to prove it.

Like a modern day Grace Kelly, Banks is an icy blonde who radiates competence and class. Unlike the Princess of Monaco, this daughter of Pittsfield, Massachusetts has never been afraid to get her hands dirty. "You name the job, baby, I had it," she says. "I was a chambermaid at a B&B where I grew up and I cleaned a lot of disgusting things out the toilets."

It's an element of Banks' sense of humour we're about to see on screen. She directed a segment in the laugh-riot sketch comedy *Movie 43*, due for release next year. It's about periods. "I knew exactly what I wanted as a director and so I knew that I should just do it and get it over with." **EEJ/JCC**

 **Pitch Perfect opens on 21 December and is reviewed on page 57. For more, check out totalfilm.com**



'I was a chambermaid at a B&B where I grew up and I cleaned a lot of disgusting things out of toilets...'

COMEDY SPECIAL

All the Right Moves

Come dancing: Nick Frost reveals his so-far hidden talent for nifty moves on the dancefloor.

WORDS ROSIE FLETCHER

Sex and salsa explode in Cuban Fury, where Nick Frost steps up for his first lead role. Meet Frosty the showman...

H

ow would you feel if I said we should do a film where I dance a lot? Imagine me in tightly fitted sequinned garments with a lot of slow-mo..." Nick Frost's opening pitch to long-time collaborator, producer and founder of Big Talk Productions Nira Park. Park was sold.

A romantic comedy set on the salsa scene, with Frost as former child dance prodigy Bruce Garrett trying to get his groove back to battle his nemesis Drew (Chris O'Dowd) and win office sweetheart Julia (Rashida Jones), *Cuban Fury* was Frost's baby from the word go – his first romantic lead and the part that could make you see him in a whole new light.

"I think it came from a fear of dancing," confesses Frost. "I don't really like dancing. I *do* like dancing secretly. I think I've always liked it, but, you know, there's a bit of stigma attached with me and dancing. I've always been fairly good at it, but because I'm a bigger guy, people look at me and say, 'Ooh, he's quite good for a big guy.' The fact of the matter is I was quite good for a thin guy, too. I think it came from a need for me to get over my fear."

Now shooting *The World's End* with Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg – the third part of the 'Cornetto Trilogy' – Frost is chatting with *TF* on a day off.

"I wanted to challenge myself," he explains. "I didn't just want people to look at me as an actor and think, 'Oh, he's the guy that plays Simon Pegg's stoned friend.'"

"I think it was important for me to get up off my arse and test myself. And I thought doing a dance film would do that. But it was very important that this wasn't a parody film. This was not a piss-take of dancing. This was a romantic comedy that happened to have Cuban salsa at its heart."

"I suppose like *Shaun Of The Dead* takes zombie films seriously in order to have fun with them, so we've taken on board a lot of the dance films like *Dirty Dancing*, *Grease* and *Footloose*," considers director James Griffiths, a feature first-timer with a background in TV who had worked with Park before on dark comedy romance *Free Agents*. Park admits developing new talent is part of her passion. Starting her career on *The Comic Strip* ("I think they needed some furniture shifting"), formerly married to Keith Allen and, at age 26, founding Big Talk, which produced *Spaced* and *Black Books*, Park is something of a svengali for Brit comedy. Moving to the big screen, she later produced Pegg, Frost and Wright's projects *Shaun* and *Hot Fuzz*, *Scott* >>



Strictly salsa: (above) with office enemy Chris O'Dowd; (below) Rashida Jones as the woman of his dreams.

Pilgrim Vs. The World and *Paul*, plus Joe Cornish's *Attack The Block* and Ben Wheatley's *Sightseers*.

"Everything I've worked on has been a collaboration between like-minded people," says Park. "I'm a massive fan of good romantic comedies and I love Nick Frost. [*Cuban Fury*] was a great one-line pitch and I knew we could turn it into something amazing. The idea of Nick learning to dance... because he is a really good dancer! On *Spaced* they used to tease him – because he has really fantastic points – that we should do a ballet film."

So how do you turn a 40-year-old ex-raver from Dagenham, albeit one with excellent points, into a convincing salsa star?

"Seven hours a day, every day, for seven months," groans Frost. "That was my full-time job. I was in the gym at 6am and I did an hour of weight training, then I went over to Pineapple Dance Studios, and we danced all day. I think the first month was the hardest because I'd never danced like that before. Having to be trained by some of Cuba's finest dancers is frustrating, because you're essentially looking at yourself in the mirror all day and it can be very disheartening when you look like a big gorilla fucking up someone's culture. Two or three months in, it just clicked and it began to work. Once I saw I no longer looked like that big culture-killing dancing gorilla, I began to look like a dancer. It worked. I loved it."

Making the salsa community proud was a goal for all concerned. While early comparisons likened it to *Blades Of Glory*, Frost says it's more like "somewhere between an Apatow film, *Napoleon Dynamite* and *Strictly Ballroom*." Park emphasises, "It's about a guy who dances to win a girl's heart, so the passion is real."

Never more so than when Garrett is battling O'Dowd's office asshole, Drew. "I like to think of him as the kind of guy who's probably applied for, and been rejected from, *The Apprentice*,"



grins O'Dowd. "I dance quite a lot. It was one of those things where I thought for some reason I'd have an aptitude for it, and that was not the case!"

Going toe-to-toe with Frost in the office car park, O'Dowd shared one of the biggest set-pieces in the movie – a grand scale dance-off complete with stunts and wire-work.

"It was like *West Side Story* [with] *Zoolander* posing," laughs Griffiths.

"We wanted to shoot it so that it looked like a knife fight in *The Bourne Identity*, but what it

"I no longer looked like a big culture-killing gorilla. I looked like a dancer. It worked. I loved it"

was, was two guys who are fairly bad dancers trying to dance the frigging pants off one another," self-deprecates Frost.

The dancing gorilla has become a floating butterfly, fluttering out of his slacker-best-mate chrysalis and into a disco-hewed limelight of leading man-dom. Post-*World's End* he'll be working on a project with *Curb Your Enthusiasm* director Bob Weide which he'll write, direct and star in – after that he's hoping to do *I, Macrobane*, which Ben Wheatley wrote for him, with second *Snow White And The Huntsman* and *Tintin* movies to fit in along the way. For now, there are more pressing things on his mind.

"Hopefully once I've wrapped *The World's End* I can put on my special, beautiful, handmade dancing shoes again and hit the clubs..." **EW**



Cuban Fury opens on 22 March and will be reviewed in a future issue. For the latest news and video check out totalfilm.com

The Brits

Three more home-grown humourers looming.

I Give It A Year



Take a UK hit factory (*Working Title*), add a *Bridesmaid* (Rose Byrne), sprinkle with Brit stars (Rafe Spall, Olivia Colman, Stephen Merchant), and this

romance-in-reverse following a couple as they fall out of love after a whirlwind marriage could just be the next *Four Weddings*. Plus it finally mines Spall's under-used charm as the object of Byrne's affection. Hugh who? **ETA** 8 February

About Time



The godfather of the feel-good romcom, Richard Curtis returns with a sci-fi fantasy starring former *The Time Traveler's Wife* Rachel

McAdams as the object of affection for another temporal tripper – a first romantic lead role for ex-Weasley brother Domhnall Gleeson. Pray it's *Notting Hill* meets *Groundhog Day* and not *Love Actually* over and over again...

ETA 22 March

The World's End



The final part of the 'Cornetto Trilogy' is currently mid-way through its 12-week shoot, following five friends re-enacting an epic pub-crawl to the titular

boozier while facing the impending apocalypse. We're expecting epic stunts to forge a fitting finale to Pegg-Frost-Wright's closing chapter. **ETA** 14 August

NEWSTEAM RE-ASSEMBLE

Five things we'd like to see in *Anchorman: The Legend Continues*...

1 MORE BRICK

Ron Burgundy might be kind of a big deal, but we'd just as happily sit through a whole movie starring San Diego's lamp-loving, slightly challenged weatherman.

2 LESS STORY

Nothing ruins a Will Ferrell comedy like a coherent plot. We want more trident-stabbing, unicorn-riding, panda-watching, Baxter-punting and a lot less common sense.

3 NEW ONE-LINERS

We're all getting tired of calling each other smelly pirate hookers, threatening to punch women in the ovaries and drinking scotch, scotch scotch – we need something else to wear on a t-shirt.

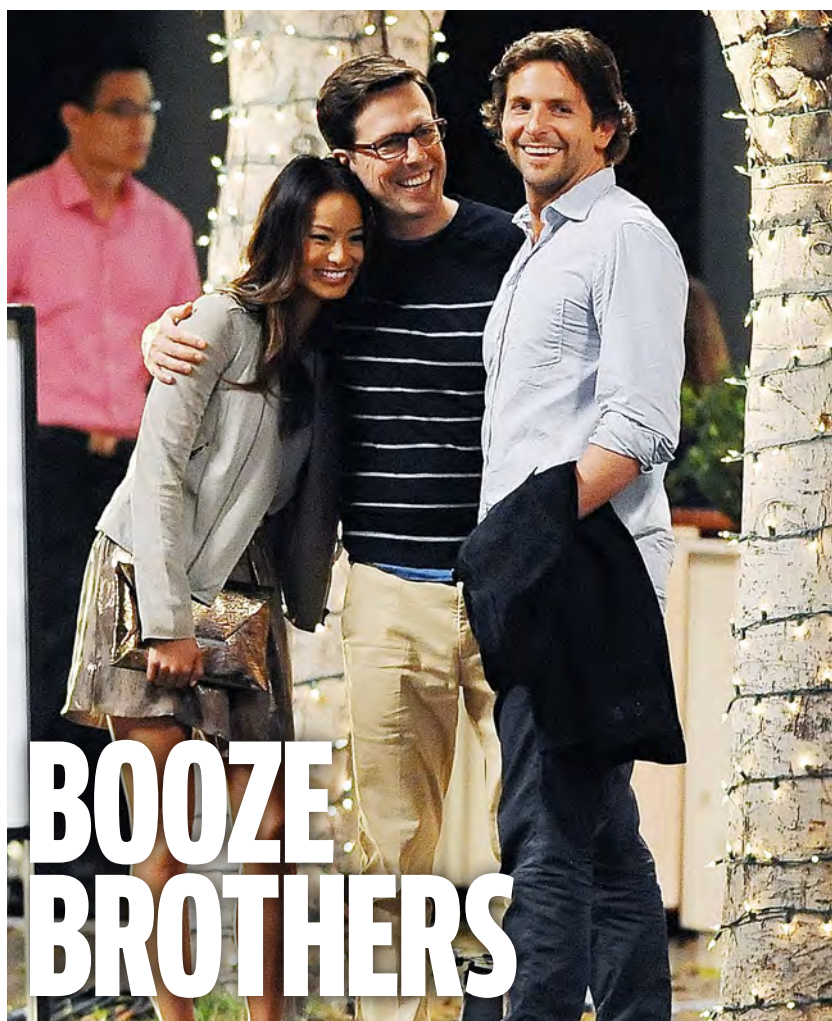
4 NO REHASHED JOKES

We've been waiting a long time for Ron's return but if we want to listen to 'Afternoon Delight' (or a late night jazz flute solo) again, we'll put on the DVD.

5 MORE CAMEOS

Anchorman is the jewel in the frat pack crown and everyone who's anyone needs to pay their respects in the sequel. Newsteam assemble!

 *Anchorman: The Legend Continues* is currently in production and will open in 2013. For more, go to totalfilm.com



BOOZE BROTHERS

Five things we'd like to see in *The Hangover 3*...

1 SOMETHING DIFFERENT

No more weddings or bachelor parties. They've run out of characters to marry off and people *do* get drunk on other occasions too...

2 MORE MR CHOW

Ever since he sprung out of a car boot and into our lives, the flamboyant Chinese gangster has been the naked heart and soul of the whole series.

3 A REALLY ELABORATE SET-PIECE

The Bangkok car chase was the madcap highlight of the last film. Given that it is the highest grossing comedy franchise around (taking well over £1bn in ticket sales alone), we want to see something that really breaks the bank in part three.

4 NO MORE MIKE TYSON

Yes, his first cameo was funny, but the guy can't act (or sing) to save his life. Not that we'd ever say that to his face. If the gang *really* need another heavyweight sparring partner, bring back Paul Giamatti.

5 AN END

Todd Phillips has already said that he wanted to make a trilogy. Sad as we'd be to see them go, it would be nice to give the Wolfpack a proper, poignant send off. **PB**

 *The Hangover 3* opens on 24 May. For more, go to totalfilm.com



COMEDY SPECIAL

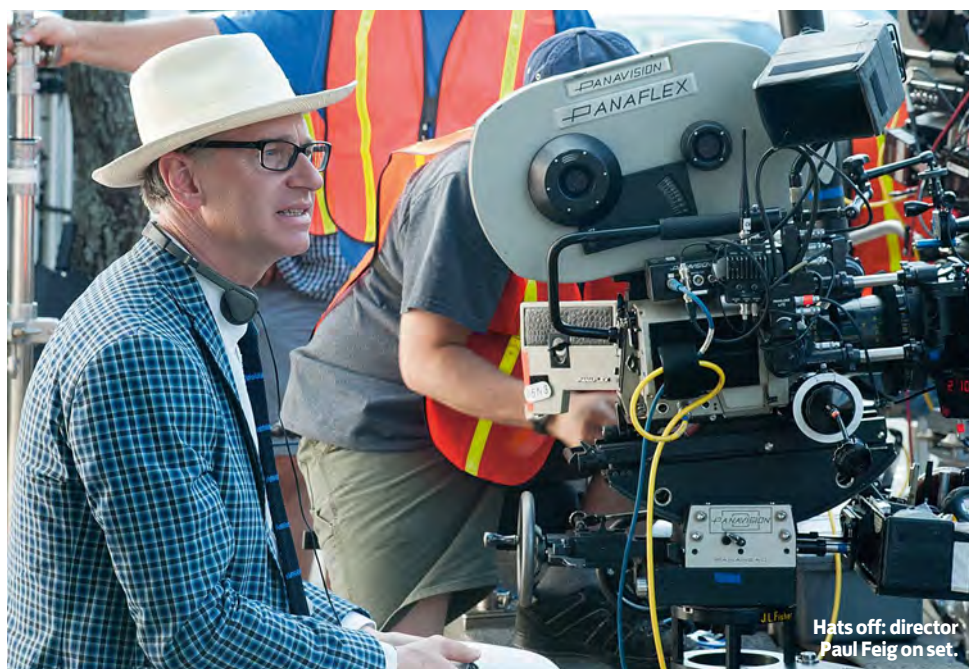
MON-FRI 10AM TO 6PM
CLOSED SAT. AND SUN.
BOSTON- 380 BOWLSTON ST.
BROOKLINE- 1099 BEACON ST.
WELLESLEY- 90 CENTRAL ST.
SUN. 10PM TO 5PM
BROOKLINE 1099
WWW

LABOR DAY
OPEN
12-5 P.M.

Undercover muthas:
Melissa McCarthy
and Sandra Bullock on
patrol in *The Heat*.

McCarthyism

Bridesmaids scene stealer Melissa McCarthy has comedy coming out of her like lava. First up, Paul Feig's *The Heat*...



Hats off: director Paul Feig on set.

definitely took my time finding the next film,” admits producer/director Paul Feig. Hardly a surprise when your last one was *Bridesmaids* – the comedy that not only topped 2011, but proved what every non-idiot knew all along: there’s a market – “half the world, in fact” – in not treating women as some sort of alien concept. “You don’t want to copy what you did before but at the same time, I was really pleased with the reaction to *Bridesmaids* and how it showed Hollywood that women are as big a draw as men if the product is right. It was really important to me to find another movie that was female-centric, that could be done in a way that wasn’t just a ‘chick-flick’.”

What he settled on was *The Heat*: a buddy-cop movie starring Sandra Bullock as uptight FBI agent Katerina James, and *Bridesmaids*’ Melissa McCarthy as the streetwise, extroverted Boston detective, Joyce Nelson – who team up to take down a Russian mobster. It’s a clash of personalities that – surprise! – doesn’t go well...

“In terms of tone, it’s not far off from *Bridesmaids* – R rated and very funny,” says Feig. “Inspirations are kind of in the vein of *48 Hrs.* and *Beverly Hills Cop* where the story plays very real and there’s real danger among the silliness. It has a bit more action. It makes it a bit more cinematic and raises the stakes a little.”

While he remains guarded on details of the film’s plot and gags, Feig is more than happy to gush about the real driving force behind the comedy: the chemistry between Bullock and McCarthy themselves.

“Melissa really gets to cut loose – we have a sort of shorthand now from *Bridesmaids*. And Sandra is so funny in real life, too. There’s a nerdy quality about her which I really love which she gets to play with in this. She’s very precise,

there’s a certain way that she does things, whereas Melissa is, like her character, all over the place. What people will really respond to though, is the friendship between these two actresses. It’s a story about two women who are so wrapped up in their professions that their personal lives have suffered – that’s where the bond eventually comes from.” **Ske**

‘There’s real danger among the silliness. It makes it more cinematic and raises the stakes’ PAUL FEIG



More Melissa: Identity Theft

After she’s done taking down the Russian mafia with Bullock, McCarthy is switching sides. With a role reportedly reworked especially for her, *Identity Thief* sees her

tearing across America as runaway fraudster Diana – hotly pursued by the mild-mannered accountant she robbed of his name, personal details and credit limit. Re-teamed with *Horrible Bosses* director Seth Gordon, Jason Bateman plays the hapless sucker on Diana’s trail. Expect lots of set-piece sized laughs, exploding rental cars and McCarthy punching a baleful Bateman in the throat. **Ace. PB**



The Heat opens 5 April. Identity Theft opens 1 March. For more features and news check out totalfilm.com

Bring on the clowns

New faces tickling your ribs.

Kathryn Hahn



You know her face – she’s popped up in numerous comedies (*Anchorman*, *Step Brothers*, *Wanderlust*, *The Dictator*, *Parks And Recreation*) but this year

you’ll learn her name. She’s co-starring with Jennifer Aniston in *We’re The Millers*, dream cast line-up *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty* and Paul Rudd starrer *Our Idiot Brother*.

Donald Faison



Scrubs’ Turk has made the small-screen-big-screen leap with roles in the upcoming *Glee*/*Bridesmaids* chimera *Pitch Perfect* and prankster-getting-hazed-

himself frat-com *The Stag*. But we’re most excited by his latest gig as Doctor Gravity in *Kick-Ass 2* where he’s up against *The Motherfucker* with his ‘gravity pole’.

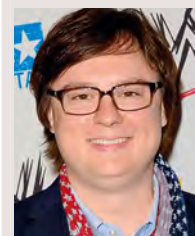
Lizzy Caplan



Janis from *Mean Girls* is all grown up... She’s starring in upcoming rebound romcom *Save The Date* with Alison Brie, Sundance favourite (and

‘the new *Bridesmaids*’) *Bachelorette*, quirk-com *3...2...1 Frankie Go Boom* and country music satire *Queens Of Country*. Yee-haw.

Clark Duke



After a small-but-integral part in *Kick-Ass* and six episodes as Clark in the *US Office*, Duke will hit his stride with divorce comedy *A.C.O.D.*, Melissa McCarthy-

headed *Identity Theft*, animated grin-inducer *The Croods* and a return to *Kick-Ass 2* as Battle Guy. Oh yes.

COMEDY SPECIAL



Fantastic plastic:
Bill Murray, the undisputed
king of deadpan.

wildbill

WORDS JENNY COONEY CARILLO
PORTRAIT MARTIN SCHOELLER

Deadpan everyman, master prankster – now the king of comedy is taking on a Presidential philanderer in *Hyde Park On Hudson*. TF touches ground with the magnificent Bill Murray.

If I talked to everyone that wanted to talk, I'd get nothing done," deadpans Bill Murray, chatting to *Total Film* in a Toronto hotel suite. Casually grazing from the platter in front of him ("This is a roasted vegetable sandwich, I think, but don't ask me to identify the vegetables..."), he's cool, in control, sporting a black blazer over cornflower blue shirt and slacks.

Ghostbusters, *Caddyshack*, *Scrooged*, *What About Bob?*, *Rushmore*, *Lost In Translation*, *Groundhog Day* – it's no surprise everyone wants to talk to him. After all, the 62-year-old *Saturday Night Live* alumnus is essentially a legend – not a phrase to be thrown about lightly. This is one of those odd interviews where we wish that, rather than minutes, we were about to spend hours, days, weeks in his domain, knowing they'd be eternally amusing, enlightening, pleasurable company, and never once leave us feeling bored or twitchy or wanting to check our Twitter feed. Still, we're happy he's gracing us with his presence at all. Most poor schmucks are plumb out of luck when it comes to locking in face time with Murray, a man who's turned sardonic expressionism into his fortune and runs his career without an agent or manager, only contactable by a voice-messaging service that he's not always inclined to check should life, love or family (he has six sons with two ex-wives) be consuming his attentions. "I found that it's easier to be hard to reach," he considers. "Eliminating a whole lot of people from your life just makes it easier. I'm not that organised, I can't handle all the information, all the requests... and people just want to *talk*. So I prefer to be less available."

>>



The commander-in-chief: Murray goes for a spin as long-serving President Franklin D. Roosevelt in *Hyde Park On Hudson*.

he has made himself available, though, for British director Roger Michell, trading comic foil-dom for presidential dignity as Franklin Delano Roosevelt in *Hyde Park On Hudson* – his first leading role since Jim Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* in 2005. Michell's film captures a bucolic weekend at FDR's upstate New York manor when the US President entertained

King George VI (last seen conquering his stutter in *The King's Speech*, this time portrayed with even deeper insecurities by Sam West alongside Olivia Colman as his clipped, comical queen) as WW2 rumbled on the horizon and various mistresses floated about the estate, including Laura Linney's Margaret 'Daisy' Suckley. We all know JFK was an epic philanderer, but FDR's straying is less well documented, perhaps because he was largely confined to a wheelchair during his record four-term presidency, having contracted polio at 39.

Richard Nelson's script, which germinated with the discovery of Daisy Suckley's letters after her death, aged 99, reveals how Suckley, Roosevelt's distant cousin, became one of his many long-standing mistresses (what Michell calls "his happy harem") – and arguably the closest. "I think this is some of the best writing I've ever been attached to," insists Murray. "Sometimes an actor's first question is, 'Tell me what the where is.' And the where is, I'm the most powerful man in the free world and I'm in my family home where I grew up, but I'm no longer little Frankie with the funny hat

and knickers, I'm the paralysed President of the United States. When you put those two things together, you get fireworks."

Where do you start with depicting the greatest American leader of the last century? "I had a great make-up artist," he shrugs. "She's a great talent. British. Actually, she's Scottish but you British claim everyone." Murray's poker face remains intact, as he goes on to explain that he actually called a halt to all the fuss around his FDR makeover. "I was like, 'OK, that's enough of that. It's close enough.' I didn't want to sound exactly like him – I can do a really spot-on impression. I could have made myself look more like him, lost more weight, but I didn't want that to get in the way of telling a good story."

Shot in UK locations over summer 2011, Murray calls *HPOH* "the most civilised job I've ever had. Around 5.30, you'd go, 'OK, let's be wrapping this up'. That was down to Roger Michell. In the USA, you keep grinding until you get it done, otherwise you'll get reported to the principal or something." And, he adds contentedly, "at least you have good coffee these days. You still need to work on the food and the weather..." Murray also confesses that playing the most powerful man in the world made him feel plenty virile. "Unfortunately, we had, like, almost an all-male crew," he laments, cranking up the droll dishevelment that's always been his meal ticket. "It was very disturbing to me. Here I was, feeling very powerful and I was just looking at

'The people that really want to find you, will find you. They don't all have a good script, but it's worked out lucky for me so far'

some guy with a cockney accent smoking a rolled cigarette."

As for real-life presidential run-ins, Murray's had a few: he's met both Bushes; sat beside Jimmy Carter at the World Series; and bumped into Bill Clinton when he was patrolling the streets of Manhattan with his Secret Service agents. "I thought I was in trouble because he'd sort of been asking me to play golf with him and I'd not gotten around to it," says Murray. "So I turned and walked right at him and all these Secret Service guys went reaching for their guns. It was like, 'Stop there or die', but I knew I had to say hello to Clinton before he said hello to me so I just marched right through them. They went, 'Oh, it's Bill Murray, we can't kill him.'"

"These guys have a lonely job," he continues. "The idea that you could have someone come in, like Daisy Suckley or any other President's girl, that would just see you as a man – you could almost weep for them just to have those moments." Wise words

from the star who Richard Donner, his director on *Scrooged*, credited with a "woolly Zen wisdom". Still, it's the anarchic humour that keeps the public goodwill for Murray so strong. As we celebrated in a recent issue of *Total Film*, stories abound that he keeps himself amused at the light-hearted expense of the public. One posits that he'll sneak up on random folk, put his arm around their shoulders and declare, "They'll never believe you." "I don't know anything about that," he demurs, neither batting an eyelid nor cracking a smile. But then he rarely does, deadpan being a way of life.

Up against powerhouse turns from Daniel Day-Lewis, Philip Seymour Hoffman and Joaquin Phoenix in *Lincoln* and *The Master*, Murray's gentle portrayal of FDR might struggle to land him a second Best Actor nomination after *Lost In Translation*. Next up, though, is another Coppola project: Sofia's older brother Roman's *A Glimpse Inside The Mind Of Charles Swan III*, before he kicks off his seventh collaboration with Wes Anderson, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, in January.

Keeping himself out of celebrity's prying eye, one imagines Murray can't help missing out on some fabulous roles. Michell spent a year pursuing him for FDR, quipping that it was like trying to track down the Wizard of Oz. But Murray applies a simple rationale to his career. "In my country," he muses, "we have an expression: even a blind pig finds an acorn every once in a while. The people that really want to find you, will find you. They don't all have a good script, but it's worked out unusually lucky for me so far." ■



***Hyde Park On Hudson* opens on 1 February and will be reviewed in a future issue. For the latest news and features check out totalfilm.com**

“He’s not the messiah, he’s a very naughty boy”

We ran a poll on totalfilm.com and you voted in your thousands for the funniest one-liners in comedy movie-dom. From Anchorman to Python, Spinal Tap to Some Like It Hot, we celebrate the movies’ greatest gags.



20 “You are a smelly pirate hooker!”

Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) in *Anchorman: The Legend Of Ron Burgundy* (2004)



19 “Those aren’t pillows!”

Neal Page (Steve Martin) in *Planes, Trains & Automobiles* (1987)



18 “Necessary? Is it necessary for me to drink my own urine? No, but I do it anyway because it’s sterile and I like the taste.”

Patches O’Houlihan (Rip Torn) in *Dodgeball: A True Underdog Story* (2004)



17 “Don’t knock masturbation. It’s sex with someone I love.”

Alvy Singer (Woody Allen) in *Annie Hall* (1977)



16 “Milk was a bad choice.”

Ron Burgundy (Will Ferrell) in *Anchorman: The Legend Of Ron Burgundy* (2004),



15 “Matt Daaamon.”

Matt Damon (Trey Parker) in *Team America: World Police* (2004)



14 “Well, nobody’s perfect!”

Osgood Fielding III (Joe E. Brown) in *Some Like It Hot* (1959)



13 “There’s only two things I hate in this world. People who are intolerant of other people’s cultures and the Dutch.”

Nigel Powers (Michael Caine) in *Austin Powers In Goldmember* (2002)



12 “Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit amphetamines.”

Steve McCroskey (Lloyd Bridges) in *Airplane!* (1980)



11 “I’ll have what she’s having”

Woman customer (Estelle Reiner) in *When Harry Met Sally* (1989)



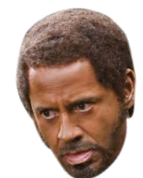
10 “Two manky hookers and a racist dwarf. I think I’m heading home.”

Ken (Brendan Gleeson) in *In Bruges* (2008)



9 “Just when I thought you couldn’t possibly be any dumber, you go and do something like this... and totally redeem yourself!”

Harry (Jeff Daniels) in *Dumb & Dumber* (1994)



8 “Everybody knows you never go full retard.”

Kirk Lazarus (Robert Downey Jr.) in *Tropic Thunder* (2008)



7 “Your father was a hamster and your mother smelt of elderberries!”

French soldier (John Cleese) in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* (1975),



6 “These go to 11.”

Nigel Tufnel (Christopher Guest) in *This Is Spinal Tap* (1984)



5 “I love lamp.”

Brick Tamland (Steve Carell) in *Anchorman: The Legend Of Ron Burgundy* (2004),



4 “What is this? A center for ants?”

Derek Zoolander (Ben Stiller) in *Zoolander* (2001)



3 “You can’t expect to wield supreme executive power just because some watery tart threw a sword at you.”

Peasant (Michael Palin) in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* (1975)



2 “Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here, this is the war room!”

President Merkin Muffley (Peter Sellers) in *Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb* (1964)



1 “He’s not the messiah, he’s a very naughty boy”

Mandy Cohen (Terry Jones) in *Life Of Brian* (1979)





Fatal

Bunny boilers: Glenn Close and Michael Douglas are reunited 25 years on. Their furry friend is nervous.

WORDS **JAMES MOTTRAM**

PORTRAIT **RICHARD PHIBBS**

Adrian Lyne's audacious 1987 sexual thriller broke the mould, boiled the bunny and prodded controversy.

Attraction

Twenty five years later, it's still a movie that won't be ignored...

Some films are hits; others become a phenomenon. Take *Fatal Attraction*. Adrian Lyne's 1987 thriller about a married man who sees a weekend dalliance turn into the stuff of nightmares had audiences literally screaming at the screen. Cries of, "Punch the bitch's face in. Kill her already. Kill the bitch!" rang out in theatres across America. A male chorus, shocked by what they saw, reacted with the only thing they had: vitriol. Only bested by *Three Men And A Baby* at the US box-office that >>



'I had men ring me up and say, "Thanks a million buddy. You've ruined it for us"'

ADRIAN LYNE



year, *Fatal Attraction* didn't just touch a nerve; it stuck a nine-inch kitchen knife in it.

Brian De Palma called it "a post-feminist AIDS thriller". David Mamet felt it was anti-women and fearful of sex. Oprah Winfrey devoted a show to real-life fatal attractions. *Time* magazine crafted a seven-page cover story, while countless other articles applauded the film for inadvertently promoting monogamy and quelling adultery. In the first week of its US release, seven out of 10 patients with marriage problems discussed the film during sessions with a prominent Manhattan psychoanalyst.

Lyne, who sneaked into one public screening to record the violent reactions, remembers the hysteria only too well. "I had men ring me up and say, 'Thanks a million, buddy. You've ruined it for us.'" The British director already had enough enemies without attracting further attention. A former commercials director, Lyne's Hollywood track record proved sex could sell. He peddled female flesh in his 1983 dance-fantasy *Flashdance* before following it with *9½ Weeks*, in which Kim Basinger and Mickey Rourke indulged in a sado-masochistic affair. Needless to say, Lyne was not a favourite amongst feminists.

Yet *Fatal Attraction* was different; this was no softcore erotica, no proto-*Fifty Shades Of Grey*. Rather, it was a story every adult could relate to – married, divorced or single. After packing his wife Beth (Anne Archer) and six-year-old daughter Ellen off to the country for the weekend, lawyer Dan Gallagher (Michael Douglas) encounters single woman Alex Forrest (Glenn Close), a book editor working for the New York publishers his firm represents. They have a fling – one night spills into two. And then Alex begins to unravel.

"It works because this has happened to everybody," commented Ned Tanen, then president of the film's studio backers Paramount Pictures. "Every woman has had the guy she's broken up with park across the street and stare at her door. Every guy has had someone call at two in the morning and hang up." Only Alex takes it to the extreme. She slices her wrists as a desperate cry for help. She begins to call Dan's house when he refuses to take her calls at the office. Then the abuse really starts... from throwing acid on the bonnet of his Volvo to kidnapping Ellen for a rather symbolic rollercoaster ride.

As *Village Voice* critic J. Hoberman put it, "It's a film stunned by the power of love to make people disrupt their lives, lose control, suffer delirium, forget who they are, leap into the abyss." Arriving when AIDS was causing society to turn its back on promiscuous sex, to re-embrace the traditional nuclear family, Alex Forrest became The Most Hated Woman In America, as one publication dubbed her. It even coined the phrase "bunny boiler" – soon to become common parlance for any unhinged singleton – in reference to Alex's most infamous moment, when she cruelly kills Ellen's pet rabbit.

Still, it's rather strange to realise this infidelity thriller, with its fashionable Manhattan locations and its Hollywood stars, has British origins. *Fatal Attraction* began life as a 45-minute film, *Diversion*, written and directed by James Dearden in 1979. An old Etonian and the son of British director Basil Dearden, he was battling writer's block when, with his wife out of town, he was struck by the thought, "What if I picked up that little black address book and rang that girl who gave me her number at a party six months ago?"

What resulted, says the writer, was "a moral tale about a man who transgresses and pays the



Dangerous liaison: (clockwise from below) Glenn Close and Anne Archer shoot that famous ending; Alex's cry-for-help suicide attempt; Adrian Lyne gives bloody direction.



Close up

The re-shot finale may have lacked the eerie grace of the planned *Madame Butterfly*-inspired suicide, but Lyne and his cast went balls-out to create a heart-pounding climax. In a manner that Hitchcock would be proud of, it's a masterly lesson in tension-building, as Alex confronts Beth in her bathroom. "I've always thought that with a sequence like this that involves suspense," says Lyne, "if you split it up as much as you can with close-ups it instantly makes the scene more tactile."

He begins with shots of taps being turned, bathwater gushing, a gun in a drawer and downstairs doors being locked – all omens for the mayhem to come. Then the killer moment – borrowed, admits Lyne, from 1966 thriller *Closely Watched Trains* – as the camera drifts up to see Beth wipe away condensation on the bathroom mirror, revealing Alex's reflection. Disturbingly, she is cutting her own leg with the knife that she had previously lunged at Dan with in her own kitchen.

"Glenn was anxious not to be a knife-wielding lunatic," recalls Lyne, "so we talked about it, and I said to her, 'What if she's got the knife dangling by her side, rather than over her head?'" While the two women grapple, it's only when Dan removes the noisy kettle from the stove to hear the chaos above that Lyne lets the scene explode. Dan throttles Alex in the bath before Beth shoots her dead after she rears up from the water (a deliberate nod to *Les Diaboliques*). Initially reluctant, Close eventually came round to this cathartic finale. "It worked," she says. "We gave the audience my blood."

penalty". Arriving before such sexual thrillers as *Body Heat* and *Jagged Edge* (which also starred Close) turned up the heat in Hollywood, the *Fatal Attraction* template was strongly etched. Starring Cherie Lunghi and Stephen Moore as mistress and adulterer, events take place over a weekend as Lunghi's character ends up cutting her wrists (just as Alex does) and placing telephone calls to her lover's family home.

Winning the Gold Plaque for best short drama at the 1980 Chicago Film Festival, Dearden soon found himself courted by Sherry Lansing. The first woman ever to be president of production at a major studio, Lansing had just left 20th Century Fox having already proved herself in Hollywood's male-dominated world. No wonder *Diversion* struck a chord. "What I liked... was that the man is made responsible," says Lansing. "There are consequences for him. When I saw that short film, I was on the single woman's side." Moreover, she immediately saw its universal appeal, the way it held up a mirror. "The film is a Rorschach test for everyone who sees it."

Having teamed up with former president of Paramount, Stanley Jaffe, to form a new production company, Lansing invited Dearden

to Los Angeles to expand *Diversion* into a feature. But while she wanted the audience "to feel great empathy for the [other] woman", that was not the feeling in town. Paramount President Michael Eisner "turned it down because he thought the man was unsympathetic", recalls Lyne. Only when Eisner quit in 1984 did Lansing return to the studio with the project, this time successfully.

Femme fatale

Even so, Dearden was immediately made to put some of the onus on the mistress, for fear of alienating the audience from the film's male lead. With each rewrite, the moral compass swung. The little black book belonging to the husband was dispensed with, while the single woman became the initiator of the affair. "She ended up having this kind of predatory quality," Dearden says. "It weakened her case and strengthened his." The dialogue was also peppered with clues of the carnage to come – phrases like "If looks could kill" and "I love animals, I'm a good cook".

Fresh from playing his intrepid adventurer in *Romancing The Stone* and its sequel, for Michael Douglas, Dearden's script was heaven-sent. For

years, he'd wanted to make a movie about how lust can destroy a married man's life. He heard about *Fatal Attraction* when he ran into Jaffe on a plane journey out of Los Angeles. It wasn't quite what he'd envisaged, but it was close enough. "The plot is a reminder that while 99 times out of 100 you get away with cheating on your wife or income tax, there may be one nasty time when you have to be responsible for your actions."

Lyne first remembers reading the story at his house in France. "I knew it was a hell of a script right from the start," he says. Sitting on the stairs when he started to read it, he didn't move until he'd finished. "Of course, that was a good sign." He accepted, perhaps because he recognised elements of his own life. Then on his second marriage, and with an 11-year-old daughter, Lyne drew much of the film's texture from this family dynamic. Just little moments, like Ellen performing her card tricks while her parents debate their move to the suburbs, came from Lyne's personal experience.

While Lyne originally thought of casting Isabelle Adjani, Glenn Close was desperate to play Alex Forrest, to move away from the saintly image she'd cultivated in films like *The World*

>>



Unsafe sex: (main) Close and Douglas open the floodgates for psycho thrillers; (below) Lyne on-set.

According To Garp and *The Natural*. She told her agents she'd even audition for the role – quite a comedown for a then three-time Oscar nominee. Flying in from New York, she was a wreck, she remembers: “I got so nervous I took a little bit of Valium.” It didn't help that Douglas was in the room, sitting behind a video camera. Saying to herself “just let it all go wild”, she went for it. “It was like lunacy unearthed,” says Lyne.

It's a mood Close retained for her wild-eyed performance – though she had doubts, particularly over the film's most notorious scene. “The bunny was the one thing I had a question about. I took the script to a psychiatrist and said, ‘Is this behaviour possible? Could somebody do something like that?’ The answer was yes.” Close ultimately consulted three clinical psychoanalysts to try and get a fixed picture of Alex, though her own life experience proved just as important. “I drew on my own unhappy and vulnerable periods as a single career woman,” she says. Ironically, at the time of the shoot, Close had fallen in love with producer John Starke and – like Alex – had fallen pregnant.

Rightly or wrongly, Alex came to define the 1980s single white female; the woman who had

put work before family. Lyne even spent time researching their surroundings – looking at dozens of Polaroid shots of studio flats belonging to single women. “They were a little sad, if you want me to be honest,” he recalls. “They lacked soul.” Certainly his findings fed into Alex's minimalist all-white loft space, and the work by production designer Mel Bourne. Overlooking – aptly – a meat market, it's in stark contrast to the Gallagher's cramped but homely apartment or the spacious suburban house they swap it for.

It was in Alex's lair that Lyne managed to craft one of the most memorable sex scenes of the decade. Not since Jack Nicholson had taken Jessica Lange on the table in *The Postman Always Rings Twice* remake had Hollywood seen such a good use for a kitchen work surface – with Alex propped up on the sink. Lyne tinged the scene with humour (Douglas tries to carry her with his trousers round his ankles), just enough to diffuse audience embarrassment. He does the same in the elevator scene (with Dan almost caught by a passer-by as he receives a blow job).

While Lyne claims his relationship with Close and Douglas “was almost a ménage à trios”, he wasn't the one performing on camera. Close



admits those scenes were exhilarating. "Michael and I just plunged into them. It was almost a catharsis for me – when we first started filming the sex scenes I thought I needed a margarita every 10 minutes. But when it was over I remember how odd it was to feel so positive about something I'd believed was potentially disturbing."

"Sex is not easy to do in movies, and everybody's a judge," adds Douglas, who completed his so-called "sex trilogy" with *Basic Instinct* and *Disclosure*. Curiously, while *Fatal Attraction* became the dinner party conversation du jour in America, it was met with a shrug in some parts of Europe. "They said, 'In France, everybody has a mistress. It's not new information!'" laughs Douglas. "But it was a huge success in France – every wife took their husband to the movies and sat him down there!"

While Lyne carefully calibrates Alex's descent into hysteria, gradually building up her psychotic profile, it was all tailored towards a very brutal ending – one that suffered an equally brutal fate. In the days before DVDs gave us regular access to deleted scenes, the original conclusion to *Fatal Attraction* became one of the most famous sequences never to make it to the screen. That is unless you were in one of the two test screenings that scored the finale so poorly Lyne was forced to re-assemble his cast, at the cost of \$1.3m, and re-shoot a more traditional ending (see the Close up box on page 107 for more).

Dark endings

In the axed scene, Beth, Dan and Ellen are in their garden, sweeping up the autumn leaves, when they are visited by three police officers. Dan is arrested, after discovering that Alex has slit her own throat with the kitchen knife that, after her earlier fight with him, is covered in Dan's fingerprints. Lyne "adored" it, he says. "It was totally horrifying. She's got him from the grave!" Well, not quite. That Beth then finds the cassette tape Alex recorded, complete with her suicidal "I can't live without you" message, suggests his incarceration for her murder will be shortlived.

Still, it was an ending that emphasised a more film noir quality than the ultimately revised scene – and contains a quite remarkable pay-off as Beth's discovery of the tape is intercut with shots of Alex sitting cross-legged on the floor, gracefully dragging the blade across her throat to the sound of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly* (echoing the earlier scene where she listens to the opera alone, flicking her light switch on and off). Such was the impact of the so-called 'suicide version', it was even shown in a handful of theatres in Tokyo

'When we started filming the sex scenes, I remember how odd it was to feel so positive about something I'd believed was potentially disturbing'

GLENN CLOSE

because, according to one local marketing manager, it had "a more Japanese flavour".

Lyne became weary of the whole furore surrounding the change. "The ending was always up for grabs and there were never just two possibilities, there were four or five discussed." According to the director, the suicide was shot off-screen as well as on, though no footage of the former ever saw the light of day. Did he feel Paramount made him go for a less graphic, more commercially palatable ending? "It was a bitter pill at first," he admits, "because you fall in love with your footage, but [*the re-shot*] ending is better dramatically."

Not that Michael Anderson and Walter Seltzer thought so. Respectively, the director and producer behind *The Naked Edge*, a 1961 film that marked Gary Cooper's last picture, were dumbstruck when they saw Lyne's revised, bloody conclusion. "It's a case of literal resemblance – shot by shot duplication," claimed Seltzer to the *Los Angeles Times*. Added Anderson, "It's the same climax, even if they have a knife replacing a razor... I'm shocked by the similarities." His response was to go to the Director's Guild to ask them to look at both films; Lyne claims he'd never even heard of Anderson's movie.

Six months after its US release, by which point the film was closing in on a \$320m global box office, *Fatal Attraction* was nominated for six Oscars, including Best Picture for Jaffe and Lansing, Best Director for Lyne and Best Screenplay for Dearden. Close and Archer were both up for Best Actress/Supporting Actress, respectively. But the film came away with nothing – beaten in all its categories by either *Moonstruck* or *The Last Emperor*. Arguably, the conflicting opinions the film threw up divided Academy voters as much as the public and the press.

In Lyne's eyes, the film was never intended as anti-feminist nor did it set out to advocate marriage or family values (despite the final, telling shot of the Gallagher group photo). "I didn't mean any sort of moral stance at all," he argues. But what it did do was provoke debate, from workplace watercoolers to op-ed columns, tapping into what *Time* magazine called "the current mood of sexual malaise". One thing's certain though: it's a classic cautionary tale. "It's saying you do have a responsibility for your actions," says Lansing, "because they have consequences." And they can be fatal. **FF**

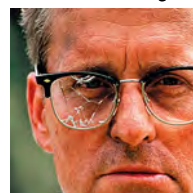


Fatal Attraction is available to buy on DVD. For more features, go to totalfilm.com

FATAL ATTRACTION

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...

Solitary man



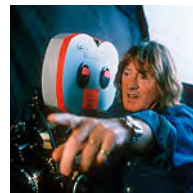
Playing Dan Gallagher led to Douglas becoming Hollywood's go-to guy for flawed alpha-males – tapping into zeitgeist anxieties about marriage (*The War Of The Roses*), sexual harassment (*Disclosure*) and the workplace (*Falling Down*). But he's now turning that upside down, playing the flamboyant pianist Liberace in *Behind The Candelabra*.

Close to the edge



Continued to find her best roles as the pathologically driven female, from the scheming Marquise in *Dangerous Liaisons* to the dog-hating Cruella De Vil in Disney's live-action *101 Dalmatians*, via ruthless legal eagle Patty Hewes in TV show *Damages*. This year's gender-bending *Albert Nobbs* saw her Oscar-nominated for a sixth time.

In the Lyne of fire



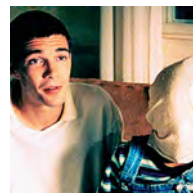
Delivered his masterpiece with LSD-'Nam horror *Jacob's Ladder*, then went sex crazy. Got Robert Redford to make an *Indecent Proposal* to Demi Moore, remade *Lolita* and tackled infidelity again with 2002's *Unfaithful*, but never quite enjoyed the success of *Fatal Attraction*. After a 10-year hiatus, he's now looking to adapt steamy thriller *Back Roads*.

Violent femmes



Alex Forrest wasn't the only screen siren to start wailing, as Hollywood woke up to the fact that audiences had a thirst for dangerous women. Sharon Stone's psychotic author in *Basic Instinct* – tormenting poor old Michael Douglas again – was followed by Jennifer Jason Leigh's loopy flatmate in *Single White Female* and Rebecca De Mornay's nutty nanny in *The Hand That Rocks The Cradle*.

Yuppies in peril



Fatal Attraction was in the vanguard of home-invasion thrillers where young upwardly mobile types came under attack. Films like *Something Wild*, *Unlawful Entry* and *Pacific Heights* all had audiences double-locking their doors at night. David Fincher's *Panic Room* revived the trend briefly, though trust Michael Haneke to top them all with *Funny Games*.

From a rash of quality blockbusters to a flurry of leftfield surprises, 2012 has been stamped with cinematic excellence. Total Film looks back on the highs – and lows – of a memorable year...

REVIEW 2012



◀ This was the year that...

DOCS RULED

The Imposter. Searching For Sugar Man. Marley. Room 237. Nostalgia For The Light. The Queen Of Versailles. Being Elmo. 5 Broken Cameras. Corman's World. This Is Not A Film. West Of Memphis... Many of 2012's best movies were documentaries, bringing to the screen stories stranger than fiction. From an Iranian filmmaker put under house arrest to a big-hearted red muppet rocking *Sesame Street*, from the fallout of Pinochet to the claims Kubrick faked the Apollo landings... stunning.



ARCHERY SCORED Maybe it's to change things up from the usual gun-waving, maybe *We Need To Talk About Kevin* started an unlikely trend, probably it's all just a coincidence, but three of the year's biggest hits – *The Hunger Games*, *Brave* and *Avengers Assemble*, in the form of Hawkeye – all boasted bow-twang heroes. Plus, Emily Blunt got an arrow in the leg in *The Five-Year Engagement*. Expect more bow and arrow-based action on the way in 2013 with *Catching Fire* and *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*.

GIRLS KICKED ASS

It used to be that a Ripley or Sarah Connor came along once every few years, if we were lucky. Now Hollywood is finally letting the ladies in on the action, with Catwoman (*The Dark Knight Rises*), Katniss (*The Hunger Games*), Mallory Kane (*Haywire*), Snow White (*Snow White & The Huntsman*) and Merida (*Brave*) all beating the boys to a pulp in grand style. Also back this year, rather more regrettably, were Alice (*Resident Evil: Retribution*) and Selene (*Underworld: Awakening*), despite being past their best. It seems you can have too much of a good thing...



CULTS SPRUNG UP Cult movies were all the rage in 2012. We don't mean offbeat movies with a small but rabid fanbase, but movies about cults. *Martha Marcy May Marlene* kicked things off in February, proving so good it was possible to remember the title, and *Wanderlust* (sort of), *Sound Of My Voice* and *The Master* followed. These were disturbing, mesmerising movies that challenged societal rules and regulations – and showed us Paul Rudd tripping his nuts off. Sign us up.

REVIEW 2012 YEAR IN MOVIES

JANUARY

Benedict Cumberbatch is cast as the bad guy in J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek* sequel... The first pics are released of Jeremy Renner as the heir to Bourne... Warner Bros denies tweaking Bane's voice after *The Dark Knight Rises* trailer arrives... *The Expendables 2* aims for a PG-13 rating...

FEBRUARY

The first images of *Skyfall* leak... Jai Courtney cast as John McClane's son in *Die Hard 5*... Whitney Houston dies, aged 48... *The Artist* and *Hugo* pick up five gongs apiece at the Academy



Awards... while Meryl Streep adds to her collection with a Best Actress Oscar for *The Iron Lady*... and Sacha Baron Cohen gets kicked out for spilling the "ashes" of Kim Jong-il over Ryan Seacrest.

REVIEW 2012 *Best Set Piece*

1 PRE-CREDITS CHASE (SKYFALL)

Throwing trains, cranes and automobiles into one huge smash-up, it trounces the Istanbul scenes in *Taken 2* and *Bourne Legacy*, and is one set-piece even Bond can't walk away from.

2 FRIDGE BOMB (THE RAID)

What's the quickest way of clearing a roomful of baddies? Put a gas tank inside a refrigerator, push it into the doorway and wait for them to riddle it with bullets...

3 CAR CHASE (JACK REACHER)

Tom Cruise aims a Chevelle through Pittsburgh, chasing one vehicle, chased by another. Forget CGI, this fender-bending charge was shot for real, collisions and all.

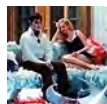
4 MONSTER MASH (CABIN IN THE WOODS)

Joss Whedon's knowing fright-flick goes into overdrive when the button marked "release all monsters" is pressed. A history of horror spills onto the screen, turning a roomful of armed soldiers into a red smoothie.

5 WIRE STREET CHASE (LOOPER)

Talk about losing your shit... Frank Brennan's ex-looper tries to outrun his contract while the mob start chopping body parts off his past self (Paul Dano). You can't run without legs...

REVIEW 2012 *Best Sex Scene*



1 JOHNNY DEPP AND EVA GREEN (DARK SHADOWS)

Take note Twi-hards, *this* is how vampires have sex – claws out, teeth bared and (literally) climbing the walls. Not only is it funny, it's erotic. Bet parents were covering their kids' eyes...

2 MARION COTILLARD AND MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS (RUST AND BONE)

Marion Cotillard finds her passion for life again after a terrible accident. Matter of fact, and goes to places Hollywood wouldn't dare.

3 JOAQUIN PHOENIX AND SANDCASTLE (THE MASTER)

A bunch of sailors leer at a woman-shaped sandcastle, then Phoenix climbs aboard and goes at it with a sex-face to rival Michael Fassbender's.

4 WILL FERRELL AND GENESIS RODRIGUEZ (CASA DE MI PADRE)

This cheeky romp is shot entirely from bum level – complete with pinching, slapping, grabbing and hilariously obvious butt doubles.

5 JASON SEGEL AND DAKOTA JOHNSON (THE FIVE-YEAR ENGAGEMENT)

Jason Segel's Tom hooks up with a tireless 23-year-old. She bangs him raw then insists they go again, while he nods off behind her.

MARCH

Johnny Depp puts a crow on his head for the first on-set images of *The Lone Ranger*... Box office slumper *John Carter* costs Disney a reported \$200m... *The Muppets* targets *The Hunger Games* in the latest of their film

trailer parodies... George Clooney is arrested outside the Sudanese embassy for taking part in a political protest... Will Ferrell announces the green light for *Anchorman 2*...



APRIL

Avengers Assemble opens, going on to be the third highest grossing movie ever... Mel Gibson is cast in the *Machete* sequel... Adam Sandler picks up a record number

of Razzies for *Jack And Jill* at the Golden Raspberry awards.

MAY

Moonrise Kingdom opens the Cannes film festival... Michael Haneke's *Amour* picks up the Palme d'Or... Steven Spielberg

says the *E.T.* Blu-ray will leave out the silly re-release tweaks... George Lucas announces his retirement from moviemaking... Nick Stahl goes missing for a month and turns up in rehab... Ridley Scott lines up his *Blade Runner* sequel after *Prometheus*. >>

REVIEW 2012 *Best Laughs*



1 HULK SMASH LOKI (AVENGERS ASSEMBLE)

Possibly the greatest put-down ever, Dr Banner gets bored with Loki's monologuing and tells him to shut up, Hulk style. After 140mins of build-up, Loki's defeated in two seconds flat.

2 RUN, CLOONEY, RUN (THE DESCENDANTS)

There's something hilarious about a broken down, middle-aged man running down the road in flip flops after discovering his wife's infidelity.

3 TIGHT SPOT (SIGHTSEERS)

Desperate to see his girlfriend not wearing her knickers, serial killer Chris drops under the table to get a close up. Only she's got her tights on...

4 GIANT SEA MONKEYS (FRANKENWEENIE)

What happens when you empty a pack of Sea Monkeys into Tim Burton's swimming pool? Mutant monster mayhem!

5 STIFLER FINGERS KEVIN'S MOUTH (AMERICAN REUNION)

Spotting Kevin's goatee, Stifler says, "Is that a pussy on your face?" Kev opens his mouth to respond, Stifler inserts two fingers... and sniffs them. >>

REVIEW 2012 *A year in must-see movies*

● JANUARY ●



SHAME

Making sure we never look at Magneto the same way again, Steve McQueen's brutal and uncompromising story of obsession, self-loathing and sexual addiction featured a coruscating performance from Michael Fassbender. It was a great New York picture, too.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

THE DESCENDANTS George Clooney found trouble in paradise.

LIKE CRAZY Bittersweet indie romance was in the air for Anton Yelchin and Felicity Jones in this likeable Sundance winner.

J. EDGAR Leonardo DiCaprio wrinkled up for Clint Eastwood's worthy, weighty biopic of the troubled FBI chief.

HAYWIRE MMA star Gina Carano smashed her way into the smart-set for Steven Soderbergh's star-studded action thriller.

● FEBRUARY ●



MARTHA MARCY MAY MARLENE

Elizabeth Olsen was haunted by the paranoid dreams of her traumatic experience with an abusive cult. Sean Durkin's unforgettable debut flashes between past and present, memory and reality, with mesmerising results.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

CHRONICLE It took the found-footage genre to freshen up the superhero movie.

YOUNG ADULT The *Juno* team reunited to put Charlize Theron in a smart, feel-bad black comedy about a home-wrecking kidult.

CORMAN'S WORLD: EXPLOITS OF A HOLLYWOOD REBEL The story of DIY movie maverick Roger Corman is just as entertaining as his own schlockbusters.

THE MUPPETS: The long-overdue comeback of everyone's favourite pig/frog duo also featured the highlight of Chris Cooper's career.

● MAY ●



THE RAID

Coming out of nowhere, Gareth Evans' Indo-Welsh actioner was *Die Hard* meets *Ong Bak* yet a true original. The camera, muscular and mobile, raced to keep up with the stunning gun fights, machete fights, knife fights, hand-to-hand fights, and... you get the picture.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

MOONRISE KINGDOM Wes Anderson did *Rambo* (!) as on-the-lam lovers were hunted down by Bruce Willis' police captain and Edward Norton's scout master.

JEFF, WHO LIVES AT HOME Jason Segel and Ed Helms got their mumble on in another sweet story of arrested development from the Duplass brothers.

FAUST Aleksandr Sokurov turned to Goethe's classic text for a hallucinatory epic.

AMERICAN PIE: REUNION The boys (and girls) were back in town for another slice of action. It blew hot and cold but hey, any excuse to hang out with Stifler...

● JUNE ●



THE INNKEEPERS

Part indie rom-com, part psychological horror, Ti West's genre-bender was the best US ghost story since *The Sixth Sense*. You'll fall in love with bickering desk-jockeys Claire (Sara Paxton) and Luke (Pat Healy)... then shudder when an uninvited guest announces itself.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

KILLER JOE William Friedkin returned to form with a twisty-turny black comedy about a moonlighting hitman with a penchant for fried chicken.

COSMOPOLIS Cronenberg gave R-Pattz a fan-unfriendly makeover (and an asymmetrical prostate) in this dense Don DeLillo adap.

PROMETHEUS Posing more questions than it answered, Ridley Scott's sorta *Alien*-prequel both dazzled and frustrated.

WOODY ALLEN: A DOCUMENTARY A squint at Woody's 40-year career.

● SEPTEMBER ●



LOOPER

Stylish, smart, thrilling *and* it boasts Joseph Gordon-Levitt – Rian Johnson's time travelling sci-fi was 2012's curveball. JG-L plays Joe, charged with killing his future self (Bruce Willis) when he's sent back through a wormhole. The film we all wanted after *Brick*.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

HOLY MOTORS Parisian beggars, Lycra-clad dancers, kidnapped fashionistas and Kylie Minogue all joined 2012's maddest movie.

LAWLESS Jon Hillcoat's depression-era drama boasted a heavyweight cast (Tom Hardy, Shia LaBeouf, Gary Oldman, Guy Pearce) and The Hardigan.

DREDD Kicking a 3D jackboot into Sly Stallone's face, Karl Urban owned Dredd.

KILLING THEM SOFTLY Andrew Dominik's '70s-flavoured crime drama was a hard, blunt attack on modern America, and Brad Pitt's best of 2012.

● OCTOBER ●



SKYFALL

Bond looked great at 50, as Sam Mendes maintained the grit but reintroduced humour. Daniel Craig was on his game, Judi Dench's M took centre stage, Javier Bardem's villain stole the show and the opening set-piece rivalled *Casino Royale*'s parkour chase.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

FRANKENWEENIE Tim Burton returned to top form with his stop-motion pean to classic horror, his own childhood and reanimated pets.

BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD A Louisiana fairytale about poverty, alcoholism and climate change narrated by a six-year-old? Unforgettable.

ROOM 237 Unearthing the hidden meanings of the Overlook Hotel.

RUBY SPARKS Paul Dano conjured up a magic girlfriend with his typewriter in a quirky romcom about appreciating the imperfections of life.

Bond turned 50, Batman retired and Michael Fassbender showed us his sex face... Welcome to Total Film's month-by-month guide to the must-see movies.

MARCH



THE HUNGER GAMES

A franchise catching fire... The first chapter of Katniss Everdeen's future-wars saga was big, bold and violent. Jennifer Lawrence's performance as the girl forced to fight in the steam-punk gladiator games fuelled the family sci-fi with grown-up emotions.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

THE KID WITH A BIKE Belgian brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne picked up Grand Prix at Cannes with their kitchen-sink fairytale about a kid with a bike.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN ANATOLIA Turkish auteur Nuri Bilge Ceylan took us on a journey into night in a crime thriller like no other.
21 JUMP STREET Jonah Hill and Channing Tatum went back to high school for a witty 'n' rowdy reboot of the daft '80s teenage soap.
TINY FURNITURE: Lena Dunham skirted mumblecore in her angst-ridden satire.

APRIL



AVENGERS ASSEMBLE

With the combined weight of every other Marvel movie on his shoulders, the stakes were stupidly high for Joss Whedon. Thankfully, he smashed it like Hulk, his super ensemble juggling screen time and egos as deftly as it balanced action, character and humour.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS Whedon's 'other' movie was a puzzle box for horror buffs. The funniest, smartest inside joke of the year.
MARLEY Kevin Macdonald's doc painted a definitive portrait of a reggae legend.
HEADHUNTERS Art thievery and grim laughs as Norwegian noir veers into Coen country. We loved the bit where he hides in shit.
BEING ELMO What, there was someone inside Elmo? A inspirational doc about the red muppet's soul man, Kevin Clash.

JULY



THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

Christopher Nolan's soaring series closer not only felt suitably apocalyptic (burn, Gotham, burn) but brought a lump to everyone's throat, too. OK, so it was hard to hear a damn word Bane growled, but none of his threat was muzzled. Stunning.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN A musical portrait of an unknown American folkster and the impact he had on apartheid-ridden South Africa.
NOSTALGIA FOR THE LIGHT Part political probe, part nature doc – Patricio Guzmán's lyrical tone poem revisited Pinochet's war crimes through astronomy.
MAGIC MIKE The best movie about dudes disrobing since *Brokeback Mountain*.
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN Wasn't the gritty, keep-it-real reboot we were promised, but Andrew Garfield convinced and the vertiginous action rocked.

AUGUST



THE IMPOSTER

Twisting around a bizarre and shocking crime story, drilling into its talking heads and forcing us to change our mind every two minutes – Bart Layton's expertly crafted documentary is more thrilling and outlandish than 95 per cent of feature movies.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

TED What's not to love about a potty-mouthed, randy teddy bear?
BERBERIAN SOUND STUDIO Unnerving, stuffy and claustrophobic, Peter Strickland's Kafka-esque ode to Italian horror was more Lynch than Argento.
TAKE THIS WALTZ When Michelle Williams got bored with Seth Rogen and went looking for meet-cutes and hot sex...
THE BOURNE LEGACY: We'll never forget Matt Damon but Jeremy Renner kept up our interest (and heart rate) as the franchise was re-Bourne.

NOVEMBER



THE MASTER

Paul Thomas Anderson's sixth feature dumped conventional narrative, flirted with Scientology and offered a singular love story between two men in '50s America – alcoholic Freddie (Joaquin Phoenix) and cult leader Lancaster Dodd (Philip Seymour Hoffman).

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

AMOUR Following an elderly couple dealing with terminal illness, Michael Haneke's most sensitive film was also his most difficult to watch.
SIGHTSEERS *Kill List*'s Ben Wheatley again straddled genres to bring us an offbeat *Natural Born Killers* set in the Midlands.
ARGO Ben Affleck managed to mix *Munich* with *Bowfinger* in this political thriller-cum-Hollywood satire. A dark horse come the Oscars.
SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK David O'Russell found comedy in mental illness.

DECEMBER



THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

OK, we haven't seen it yet, but how can it not be great? After delivering 10-hours of near-as-dammit perfection with the *LOTR* trilogy, Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens are journeying back to Middle-earth.

OTHER MUST-SEE MOVIES

LIFE OF PI Ang Lee recreated Yann Martel's epic about a boy, a tiger and a boat.
JACK REACHER Tom Cruise stepped comfortably into Reacher's size 12s as Christopher McQuarrie delivered a tense, dense thriller.
THE HUNT Thomas Vinterberg's tale of a lonely teacher (Mads Mikkelsen) accused of child abuse proved his best since *Festen*.
SEVEN PSYCHOPATHS In *Bruges* man Martin McDonagh returned with a crime caper about a screenwriter, LA lowlifes and a dognapped shih tzu.

REVIEW 2012 Poster Booster

This year's onesheet wonders...



REVIEW 2012 Best Dialogue

"America's not a country. It's just a business. Now fuckin' pay me" Jackie Cogan (*Killing Them Softly*)

"It's called 'Mind Rape'. It's actually pretty mellow" Ted (*Ted*)

"Mary Ellen, you were great tonight. It's so inspiring to see a single mother with so much confidence on stage. Really" Mavis Gary (*Young Adult*)

"Let's just finger each other's mouths" Jenko (*21 Jump Street*)

"What a lovely, lovely voice" Bane (*The Dark Knight Rises*)

"The law says you cannot touch... but I think I see a lot of lawbreakers up in this house tonight..." Dallas (*Magic Mike*)

"OK, I'm drawing a line in the fucking sand. Do not read the Latin!" Marty (*The Cabin In The Woods*)

"Our daughter's been abducted by one of these beige lunatics!" Walt Bishop (*Moonrise Kingdom*)

REVIEW 2012 Best Dire-logue

"We keep it light, till it's time to go dark, then we go pitch black, you understand?" Barney Ross (*The Expendables 2*)

"Just because I'm telling you this story... doesn't mean I'm alive at the end of it" O's voiceover (*Savages*)

"Look, I'm just a geologist, I like rocks. love rocks. Now it's clear you two don't give a shit about rocks..." Fifield (*Prometheus*)

"I did a bare ass 360 triple back flip in front of 22,000 people. It's kind of funny, it's on YouTube, check it out. But when my dad got sick, I did something way crazier than that" Johnny Blaze's voiceover (*Ghost Rider: Spirit Of Vengeance*)

REVIEW 2012 Best Taglines

A totally twisted deep-fried Texas redneck trailer park murder story *Killer Joe*

They won't take any shih tzu *Seven Psychopaths*

The only thing getting blown tonight is their cover *21 Jump Street*

Taking out the trash, one jerk at a time *God Bless America*

JUNE
Director and screenwriter Nora Ephron dies, aged 71... Liam Neeson makes more threatening calls in the *Taken 2* trailer... Jim Carrey leaves the *Dumb And Dumber* sequel... Pixar's *Monster's University* gets a

preview ahead of *Brave*... A huge billboard with a bat-shaped hole in it is erected in LA... Charlie Sheen is announced as the US Prez in Robert Rodriguez' *Machete Kills*.



JULY
Peter Jackson confirms that *The Hobbit* will be split into three films... *The Dark Knight Rises* opens... the 3D *Dredd* reboot screens at Comic-Con...

The last surviving member of *The Dirty Dozen* and *The Wild Bunch*, Ernest Borgnine dies, aged 95... K-Stew admits cheating on R-Pattz with *Snow White & The Huntsman*'s director... Danny Boyle smashes the opening ceremony of the Olympics.

AUGUST
Bruce Campbell drops hints about the *Evil Dead* remake... *Top Gun* director Tony Scott dies after jumping from a bridge in Los Angeles... The first trailer lands for Martin McDonagh's *Seven Psychopaths*... Keanu

They said what?!

"There was me, half-Welshman, half-reptile, having a fag on the Sony lot" Rhys Ifans on *The Amazing Spider-Man*

"Kissing Russell Brand was like kissing any leading lady" Alec Baldwin talks *Rock Of Ages*

"I don't know if you've ever had someone else's fingers in your mouth, but it's disgusting."

Channing Tatum recalls working on *21 Jump Street*

"I've got the purple helmet!" Fassbender makes *Magneto* filthy

"I look back at the interviews I did in America and think, 'What the fuck were you doing, you tosser?'" Hugh Grant recalls his *Four Weddings* persona

REVIEW 2012 Best Scores



1 CELLAR CHILLS (THE INNKEEPERS)
Ghost hunting in the basement of a creepy hotel, co-workers Claire and Luke sense a presence. "It's behind you," stutters Claire after a build-up, and Luke bolts. Nothing shown; everything felt.

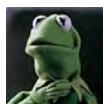
2 HOME FOOTAGE (SINISTER)
Never watch the Super-8 footage you find in the house where a family was horribly murdered. Especially if you start seeing terrifying demon faces lurking in the corners of the frame...

3 HOME INVASION (MARTHA MARCY MAY MARLENE)
The horror of *MMMM* unfolds slowly, but it's the cult's first violent test of faith in a suburban home that stays with you the longest (and evokes memories of Charles Manson)...

4 HOME ABORTION (PROMETHEUS)
Catching a pre-alien chest-burster before it has a chance to pop, Noomi Rapace performs some horrifying future-tech home surgery on herself. Reduced viewers to foetal balls.

5 BAD DREAM (AMOUR)
Remember the throat-slit moment in *Hidden?* Well, Haneke's at it again... Coming in the middle of a sensitive film about a stroke victim, a hand suddenly bursts from a head in a jolting nightmare.

REVIEW 2012 Best Trailers



1 MUPPET PARODY TRAILERS
Sending up everything from *Paranormal Activity* to *Green Lantern*, it was the pitch-perfect *Pig With the Froggy Tattoo* that got the perfect mix of muppets and movie love.

2 THE MASTER
Looking like a picture postcard from the '50s and fitted to Jo Stafford's moody crooning, PTA's masterpiece got a discombobulating teaser that kept the story under wraps.

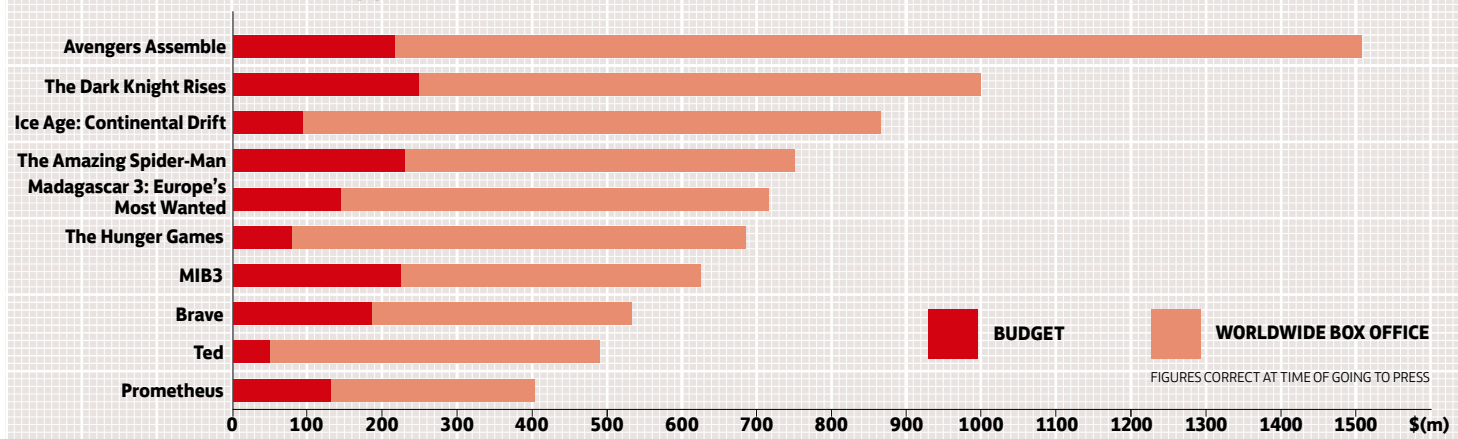
3 COSMOPOLIS
Hammering away at R-Pattz's squeaky-clean image, the fast-cut, techno-noir trailer has him humping in limos, punching passers-by and blasting a hole through his hand.

4 THE HOBBIT: AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY
The first bar of *that* score was all it took to sweep us back to Christmases past and get us stupidly excited about going back to Middle-earth all over again.

5 DJANGO UNCHAINED
Mixing Johnny Cash with James Brown, classic Western compositions with pulp '70s sounds – it can only be a Quentin Tarantino movie. Love the blood splatter over the cotton plants.

REVIEW 2012 Busting blocks

The 10 biggest hitters of 2012...



Reeves confirms that *Bill And Ted 3* is still in the works... Joss Whedon signs on for *The Avengers 2*... Shots of Darren Aronofsky's biblical epic show Russell Crowe as *Noah*... and new images of Spielberg's *Lincoln* reveal Daniel Day-Lewis as Abe.

SEPTEMBER
Extras on the *Prometheus* Blu-ray promise to answer all our questions... Joseph Gordon-Levitt plays a young Bruce Willis in *Looper*... Rupert Wyatt leaves the director's chair on *Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes*... Jim

Carrey is confirmed to head up the cast of *Kick-Ass 2*... Leaked photos of a naked Scarlett Johansson set the internet on fire... *Green Mile* star Michael Clarke Duncan dies, aged 54...

OCTOBER
Ryan Gosling drops out of *Logan's Run* remake... Michael Fassbender joins Malick's latest... Disney purchase Lucasfilm for \$4.05bn.

NOVEMBER
Nic Cage signs to *The Expendables 3*... *Skyfall* beats the seven-day UK opening box office record... The first trailer of *World War Z* suggests a zombie pandemic of gigantic proportions. **TF**



Jules Winnfield. Ordell Robbie. Mace Windu. Nick Fury. **Samuel L. Jackson** is the king of cool and he's now re-teaming with Tarantino for bloody, bizarro revenge movie *Django Unchained*. **"This is Quentin's version of a western,"** he says, promising violence and controversy. **"People will be incited by this film..."**

Sam Jackson is a tough interview. Yes, he can flash the charisma any time he pleases, and yes, he is, indeed, the coolest motherfucker on the planet (even in white basketball shorts, t-shirt and sneakers). But he's also brusque and combative, pointedly lowering his chin at the start of each question to scowl over the rims of his round glasses. And if he doesn't like the question? He takes issue with it, sometimes directly, sometimes via a neat line in caustic humour.

"You still look so young," chirps a journalist at the round table session of the *Django Unchained* junket at the Four Seasons hotel in Beverly Hills, LA. "How do you do that?" "Virgin blood," is 63-year-old actor's pithy response. "No, seriously," asks the journalist. "Seriously," comes the deadpan reply.

At *Total Film's* one-on-one session, Jackson sighs at the prospect of talking about anything other than *Django*. "What we gonna talk about?" he demands. The back catalogue... A roll of the eyes.

It's refreshing, kind of, given so many interviews are carefully managed PR campaigns comprising courteous smiles and anodyne soundbites. Jackson might be spiky but he's also frank, honest and interesting.

Born in Washington, D.C. on 21 December 1948, Samuel Leroy Jackson saw his father just

twice and his mother sporadically as he was raised by his maternal grandparents in Chattanooga, Tennessee. A bright, hard-working child who read voraciously and learned the French horn and trumpet, he attended Atlanta's Morehouse College to study architecture. But it was here, enrolled in public speaking classes to cure his stutter, that he was bitten by the acting bug, graduating with a degree in arts drama in 1972. He also became politically active during his time at Morehouse, involving himself in the Black Power movement (he would later refer to it as his "kill Whitey period").

The next 18 years were spent doing TV, small roles in small movies and stage acting. Jackson even worked as Bill Cosby's stand-in on *The Cosby Show* to pay the bills... and to feed his drug and alcohol habit. But things changed with Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever*, a fresh-out-of-rehab Jackson playing crack addict Gator Purify ("I thought, 'Why not? I've done the research...'") and winning a best supporting actor prize at the Cannes Film Festival. And then? Scanty but noticeable turns in *GoodFellas* and *Jurassic Park* followed by Bible-quoting, profanity-spouting, bad motherfucker wallet-sporting assassin Jules Winnfield in *Pulp Fiction*.

From that point forward Jackson has not looked back, averaging four or five films a year, all genres, all sizes. His career longevity (more than 100 movies) and appearances in blockbusters

Die Hard With A Vengeance, the *Star Wars* prequels, *The Incredibles* and an assemblage of Marvel movies, playing S.H.I.E.L.D. director Nick Fury, has made him, officially, the biggest box office star of all time: \$9bn worldwide.

And now Jackson is again starring for Quentin Tarantino – their fifth collaboration – in *Django Unchained*. Sucking on an electronic cigarette and scowling over the rims of those glasses, he readies himself to talk about QT's epic western/slave drama/love story/revenge movie. And, if he must, that 40-year career...

How did you find Tarantino on *Django Unchained*? Has he changed over the years?

Yes, he has more money and more toys to play with.

Have you changed?

Yes, I have more money and more toys to play with.

And now you get to play, together, in a western. Is it a genre you admire?

This is Quentin's version of a western, which should be interesting to anybody. I always liked westerns. When I was a kid, I watched a lot. John Wayne. Roy Rogers. Gene Autry. It's always been a staple of the American film industry. There haven't been a lot of good ones made recently, other than *Unforgiven*. Maybe *Tombstone*.

Quentin showed 10 minutes of footage yesterday. You were only in it for a few seconds, but he's made you look a lot older!

>>

SAMUEL L. JACKSON



I'm not in the movie that much. You probably saw as much as you're going to see.

So, who do you play?

Is it in the notes?

No.

Yes, it is.

Just your bio is in the notes.

I heard it was.

Your bio, but not your character.

Really?

Well, it says you play Stephen, but nothing more.

Old slave. Old, old slave on the plantation.

That's it.

What's his relationship with Django?

None. He hates him. They don't like each other.

They have a very contentious relationship.

Partly because Django's free, and partly because it's black-on-black crime. That's all it is. I see him and I don't like him. He sees me and he doesn't like me. I have a lot of power. I'll say that.

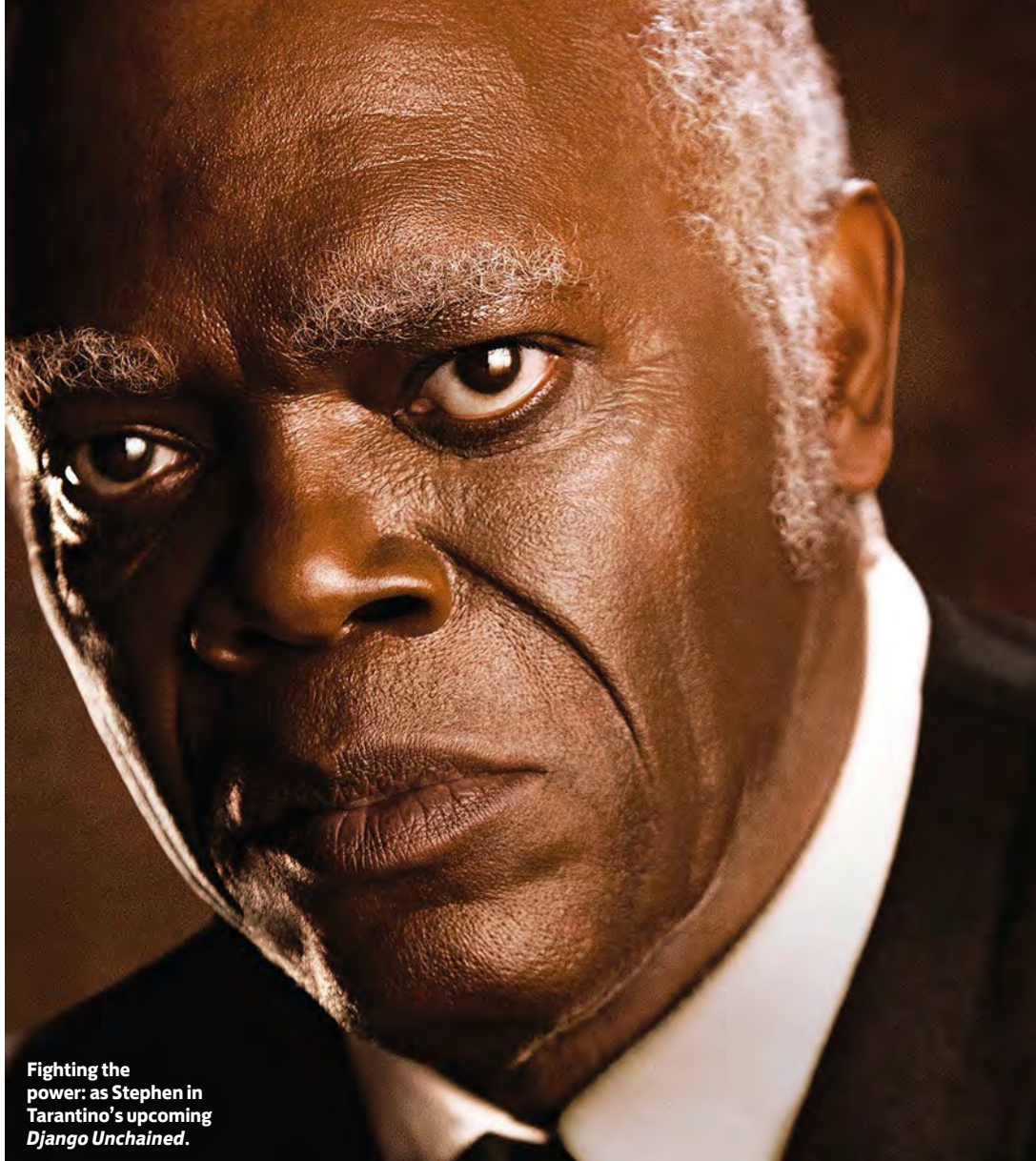
I'm a slave with a lot of power, which is not a good combination.

You're the slave of Leonardo DiCaprio's plantation owner, Calvin Candie. Is Candie a badass?

Not really. Calvin Candie runs a pretty interesting plantation that's the biggest cotton plantation in Mississippi. I essentially run the plantation. I'm his eyes and ears when he's not around, or even when he is around, because his major concern is Mandingo fighting. He raises fighters; guys who kill each other.

You mentioned this is Quentin's version of a western. What signature touches does he bring?

I don't know. You guys [*journalists*] have created this Tarantino monster of sorts that makes him a genre all to his self. I guess his method of telling a story – characters and their relationships – make him unique. The way his characters speak



Fighting the power: as Stephen in Tarantino's upcoming *Django Unchained*.



'Quentin and I have a relationship where I love what he writes and how it sounds coming out of my mouth'

is always interesting. He's one of the few writer/directors of this age that's not afraid to use dialogue. I think he's interested in watching the performances. You have the DoP who looks at the composition and it's more important to Quentin to be there to watch the relationships between the characters. It's really great seeing someone who appreciates the performances.

Tarantino's films are often described as "cool"...

He's not at all. He makes cool films. That doesn't make him a cool person. It just means he makes cool films. Way back when, John Woo was making all those great movies with Chow Yun-fat. You look at John Woo, you go: "*That's the dude that made those movies?*" He was like a businessman. One thing has nothing to do

with the other. Everybody expresses creativity in a different way.

Tarantino's been criticised for appropriating the n-word in his movies. Will he now be criticised for making a film about slavery?

Yes, of course. But art is supposed to stimulate and get people thinking, talking. It's somebody's expression of something. People will be incited by this film. Some people will be upset at the language. Some people will be upset at the depiction of what happened at a certain point of our history. But that doesn't negate that it happened. Jewish people don't mind being reminded of their history. They make films that show people being persecuted and going to the ovens. It's part of who they are. It's part of what

happened. As long as they can be reminded of it and understand that it happened, they don't allow it to happen again. African Americans tend to act like they don't want to see movies about slavery. They don't want to act like it didn't happen, but they also don't want to be reminded of it.

So will *Django* enlighten people?

Hopefully it will make people talk and stimulate them to learn something about the time and understand why that place got us to this place, and what's different about it and what's the same about it right now. But *Django* is a revenge story.

It's a love story. It's entertainment. There's historical fact in it, and there's historical licence in it, the same way as it was in *Inglourious Basterds*. Did *Inglourious Basterds* make everyone read about WW2? I don't think so!

Of course, it was a Tarantino movie, *Pulp Fiction*, which made you a star in the mid-'90s...

Really?

Did it help, dealing with the fame, that you were in your '40s, a veteran of stage, TV and film work?

More than likely. I think the time I spent in the theatre and the lessons I learned about inheriting characters or inhabiting characters gave me a method to work, in film, which was different from a lot of people. In terms of being overwhelmed by fame, I guess being a mature

Five star turns

Sam is, truly, the man...



#1

PULP FICTION (1994) ★★★★★

So impressed was the Cannes jury by Samuel L.'s junkie turn in 1991's *Jungle Fever* that it created a special award for best supporting actor just for him. The Academy, in contrast, was slower off the mark, taking four more years to recognise his talent and only then giving its award to Martin *Ed Wood* Landau. The irony was the plum role of jheri-curled, scripture-spouting assassin Jules almost went to Paul Calderon after Jackson fluffed his first audition.



#2

A TIME TO KILL (1996) ★★★★★

"Yes, they deserved to die and I hope they burn in hell!" yells Sam in his role as Carl Lee Hailey, the father on trial for slaying his daughter's rapists in Joel Schumacher's adap of John Grisham's thriller. With stand-out moments like that it's no surprise his performance turned heads, earning him both a Golden Globe nod and an NAACP 'image' award. "Jackson has the most potent dramatic opportunities and makes the most of them," gushed *Variety's* critic.



#3

JACKIE BROWN (1997) ★★★★★

From *True Romance* to *Django Unchained*, Sam has been a near-constant presence in Quentin Tarantino's oeuvre. Of all the films they've made together, though, it's his leisurely Elmore Leonard adap that remains his favourite, even if he's not entirely happy with how his Kangol-clad lowlife Ordell Robbie exited the story. "I think he's smarter than that," sighs Jackson. "But it's such a consummate film. All the characters are defined and well-stated."



#4

UNBREAKABLE (2000) ★★★★★

Jackson brushed shoulders with Bruce Willis in *Pulp Fiction* and had his back in *Die Hard With A Vengeance*. Yet their finest collaboration remains M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* follow-up, a daring exploration of comic-book lore given an extra charge by Sam as the crippled Elijah Price. "I'm always reading comic books," admits the actor, who'd have been happy to revisit "Mr Glass" had the proposed *Unbreakable 2* materialised. "It's always been part of my life."



#5

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE (2012) ★★★★★

Sam's multi-picture deal to play S.H.I.E.L.D. chief Nick Fury in Marvel's *Avengers* cycle came at an opportune time for the 63-year-old, granting him regular blockbuster exposure just as leading man gigs were starting to dry up. If Joss Whedon's superhero mash-up proved anything, though, it was that he could still kick ass when required. "I admire his hard-headedness, determination, managerial skills and his toughness," says Jackson of his eye-patched alter-ego.

individual keeps you from falling into the traps – or kept me from falling into the trap of thinking I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread. I understood that I got there for a reason and I got there in a certain way, so I didn't change my approach to what I was doing. I didn't take for granted that it was going to be there forever. You've got to work. It's what I've always done. **You've always had a reputation as being a hard working, conscientious pro. How to you respond when actors turn up less prepared than you?** Everybody works in their own way. I try to be on time, hit my mark, know my lines. I try to be efficient. And very repetitive.

Repetitive?

If you're doing a scene and you pick up a glass and take a drink, you take a drink on the same word, you put it down on the same word. It makes the director's job easier. It makes the other actors' jobs easier because they can depend on you to do the same thing every time. The editors love you because they can cut you into any scene. I lead by example. I don't ask anybody to do anything. I just do what I do. If that appeals to you, you can try to emulate it. If it doesn't, or if it's too much for you, find your own way. I try not to get frustrated by other people's processes, and hopefully they won't get frustrated by mine.

Do you ever change dialogue to fit your mouth?

It all depends on the director. Quentin and I have that kind of relationship where I love what he writes and how it sounds coming out my mouth. There are times I say, "I need to say this tough, to make that connect with this..." And he'll go, "Well, let me hear it." He'll listen and go, "Yeah, that's cool." There are times I'll talk to a director about what's going on in a scene, that something happened before or something happened after, that hasn't been connected, and we can meet in the middle. [Smirks] Unless it's M. Night Shyamalan, in which case it's *all* about what he wrote.

You obviously have a great respect for Tarantino's characters and dialogue. Do you consider Pulp Fiction's Jules and Jackie Brown's Ordell as the best characters you've been gifted? They're OK guys. They say interesting things.

Time's only made it all the more astonishing that you didn't win the Oscar for Pulp Fiction....

Get over it. It's just more work when you're dusting the house.

You do four or five movies a year. Is it important to keep flexing the acting muscles?

Yeah. Painters get up and paint every day. Writers get up and write. Actors should get up and act. That's what I do.

What about the other way of looking at it? De Niro, back in the '70s, did one film a year. Now he does lots of films and the quality has leached away...

You know, I love Bob and what he does. I love old Bob and I love new Bob. I love all that. I don't know how some actors do just one movie a year. I have a need to do what I do. But if doing one movie a year satisfies their creative gene, more power to them. It doesn't satisfy mine.

In your early roles, you played addicts, thieves and people who died 30 minutes into the movie...

You mean black people.

>>

You grew up politicised. Were you pissed off by the limitations of the characters offered or were you just pleased to be working?

People talk about the size of the role. Even my wife used to say, "Why you doing that?" But there are no small roles, only small actors. I used to say, "Well, OK, I'm going to meet these guys and they're going to do some more films..." The one thing about being those particular characters is that if I'm in that particular scene, I'm going to make it better. Or I'm going to be so good in that scene that when I leave it, people will want to stay with me. Or I'm going to die so good, they're going to miss me and wish they hadn't kill me. Everything led to another thing for me. You go in and do the best job you can possibly do and there'll be someone standing there watching you do it. They'll tell somebody when they're on another film, "You know, I was in another film with this guy who was doing this particular thing..."

So it's all part of the bigger picture?

I always look at every job as a learning experience. I was Bill Cosby's stand-in for two years on *The Cosby Show*. When I was there, I was telling myself that if I'm ever doing a show with three cameras, I know how to do it. So that's

The next big leap after *Jungle Fever* was *Pulp Fiction*. It anointed you as the 'coolest actor on the planet'. Was it a tag you were happy with?

I was never conscious of it in that particular way. People tend to attach your personality to who you are on screen. Now I'm on Twitter, people say, "Oh, you weren't acting. You're just being yourself." It's sort of an insult. It's sort of not. Because my Twitter character is a character. It's me in a way, but it's not me. When you play characters that say snappy things and seem to be in control in their environment, people label that as being cool. I don't see myself as that because I get confused sometimes during the day and I have moments of "Fuck, I wish I could do something about this, and I can't." And I don't feel so cool.

Has it become harder to inhabit characters as you've become more successful?

What the fuck does that mean? I'm not sure what that means. Am I supposed to become a worse actor as time goes on? Because I have success, so I don't work at it anymore? I just show up and call it in? I do the same thing I always did.

But everyone knows you now, or at least the persona, and has to get past that to get to the character. You've been in more than 100 movies.



'I'd like to go to Japan and do a Takeshi Miike film. I'd like to do a German or Russian film. That'd be dope.'

what I did. I learned how to do three cameras while I did that show.

In the early '90s you went through rehab and emerged worried that sobriety would dilute your work. But then you made *Jungle Fever*, playing an addict, and won an award at Cannes...

I emerged from [rehab] with a lot more clarity: being able to understand the work and get in touch with it, not standing outside of it and watching it happen. I used to stand and watch myself act, and think "This shit is awesome" when it was fucking not. I was not in touch with what I was doing. When I now go back and look at some of it, I go, "I wish I could go back and do some of that again." The amount of clarity and discipline now in the work, being able to do it over and over again in the same way with the same intensity, allows the other actors to trust you.

[Nods, puffs on electronic cigarette]

How do you choose your roles?

There are several different theories as to why I choose a film. Some films I choose because they were the films I used to go and see as a kid and I always wished I could do a film like that. And then there are other films I do because I'm moved by the story or I'm touched by it, or I want to tell that story because I think it's great, and I look for a character inside that story I want to be so I can make that story as good as it can be.

When you say movies like those you enjoyed as a kid, do you mean *Deep Blue Sea*, *Jurassic Park*...

[Nods] ... *Snakes On A Plane*, *Rules Of Engagement*. I always wanted to play soldiers. I always wanted to be in a western, though *Django* is not a western where I'm the guy with the guns in the middle of the street, drawing on people. That would be cool.

And the *Star Wars* trilogy? You loved swashbucklers as a kid, right?

I always wanted to be Errol Flynn. I always wanted to swing from ship to ship with a sword in my hand and a dagger in my teeth. But they weren't making those until they started doing the shit with Johnny Depp. A lightsaber's just as cool as a sword. Cooler.

How do you think the second *Star Wars* trilogy stands up to the first? There seems to be a generational rift in opinion...

Us older guys who watched *Episodes IV, V* and *VI* were kinda too old, especially for *Episode I*. Because *Episode I* was basically a kiddie movie. It's about this little kid who gets to do all this fantastic shit. Little kids watch that and they're like, "Wow, I wish I could do this." And they love Jar Jar Binks, who all adults hated. But



Lifeline

21 December 1948

Samuel Leroy Jackson born in Washington, D.C. as an only child.



1972

Makes film debut in *Together For Days* and moves to NYC.



1991

Post rehab for drug abuse, stars in *Jungle Fever* and wins a bespoke supporting actor award at Cannes.

PHIL FISK/CAMERA PRESS; PHOTOPOST/REX

SAMUEL L. JACKSON



In command: as Nick Fury with Captain America and Tony Stark in *Avengers Assemble* (2012).

that's what George was doing. George knows what George is doing. Everyone else can question it. Or we take possession of things in a certain way and go, "I don't care if the creator is writing it; he has no right to write that because he's letting me down because that's not the story I want him to tell." Let him tell the story he wants to tell.

The *Star Wars* films have helped make you the biggest box office star of all time.

I've heard that.

More so after *Avengers Assemble*! Were you surprised at all by the amount of money that it took?

I was. Nobody expects a movie to become a juggernaut. You expect a certain number of people to go and see it. *Avengers Assemble* was a fucking juggernaut. It was amazing. All the

credit totally goes to Joss because he wrote a movie being a comic-book fan, being a person who understands the genre. He's the first person to make a comic-book movie right by making sure the comic part was in it. We didn't realise while we were standing there doing it that it would be that awesome. I was never there when the Hulk was actually the Hulk, which was a major part of the success of that film. Who knew the Hulk could be that funny?

What's the latest on *The Avengers 2*?

The Avengers 2 is coming. Joss is writing that. He's already been hired to write that. I think my next time as Nick Fury is in *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. Because I'm not in *Iron Man 3*. None of the Avengers are in *Iron Man 3*. It's a standalone *Iron Man* movie.

And will there be a Nick Fury movie?

I don't know.

It's been rumoured for some time.

It's been rumoured? Where?

Magazines, websites. All over Twitter...

[Laughs] Twitter? Come on.

People want it to happen.

They're not moviemakers. They're just fans.

Fans can make it happen.

Fans don't finance movies. Unless I can get them all to send me a dollar, and I can do it myself.

That would be great.

Looking over your career, you've worked with so many of the great living directors...

[Snorts] Who?

Scorsese, Friedkin, Boorman...

Oh, they're still alive?

Spike Lee, Tarantino, Spielberg, Lucas. Is there anyone who's got away?

I can't think. I've worked with a lot of guys. I'd love to go to Japan to do a [Takeshi] Miike film.

That'd be awesome. I'd love to work in Korea.

There are places I'd like to work that I haven't

worked. I'd like to do a German film. I'd like to

do a Russian film. That'd be dope.

You should work with Woody Allen. He seems to be touring Europe these days.

How many black people have you seen in a Woody Allen movie?

Only a couple, recently. Maybe you could be his first black lead?

I'm thinking I can break the mould. I'll tell Scarlett to speak to him...

And while we wait for Samuel L. Jackson headlining a Woody Allen film set in Russia, we'll have the *RoboCop* and *Oldboy* remakes...

I don't know really know anything about *RoboCop*.

I know they're shooting it and I'm supposed to get

a new script, which is totally different from the

one that I read, so I have no idea. *Oldboy* is pretty

much *Oldboy*, in a way; but it's different, in a way.

I'm the guy who runs the place where he's locked

up... the guy with the jacked-up teeth. I think the

story is rewritten in a very interesting way and

hopefully it'll be everything people like about the

original *Oldboy*. Or people who have no idea what

Oldboy is will be able to watch this movie and go

"whoa". It's going to be chemical.

Will both the *RoboCop* and *Oldboy* remakes retain the violence of the originals? They were benchmark movies.

Yeah, pretty much. They're not going to wuss out with them. **TF**

 *Django Unchained* opens on 18 January and will be reviewed in a future issue. *Oldboy* will be released late 2013, *RoboCop* early 2014. For more features, go to totalfilm.com



1994

His 30th film role in *Pulp Fiction* brings awards noms and recognition.



1999

A fertile period of work cements cult status with role in *Star Wars: Episode I*.



2008

Plays Nick Fury in *Iron Man*. Reprises the role in multiple superhero movies.



2013

Re-teams with Tarantino for fifth time on *Django Unchained*.

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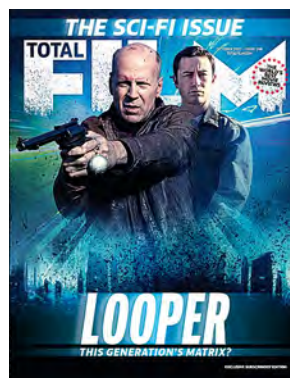
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★★★★ Lovely, lovely
★★★ Tame
★★ No gain
★ Pain

The Total Film home entertainment bible

Lounge



Why The Dark Knight Rises ends Nolan's trilogy on a high

Happy ending

FILM DISC OF THE MONTH

ILLUSTRATION BY LIZZY THOMAS

NEW RELEASES 23.11.12 – 21.12.12

Lounge DVD & Blu-ray

The Bourne Legacy	★★★	p132
Brave	★★★	p129
By The Bluest Of Seas	★★★★	p137
César Et Rosalie	★★★★	p139
The Colditz Story	★★	p139
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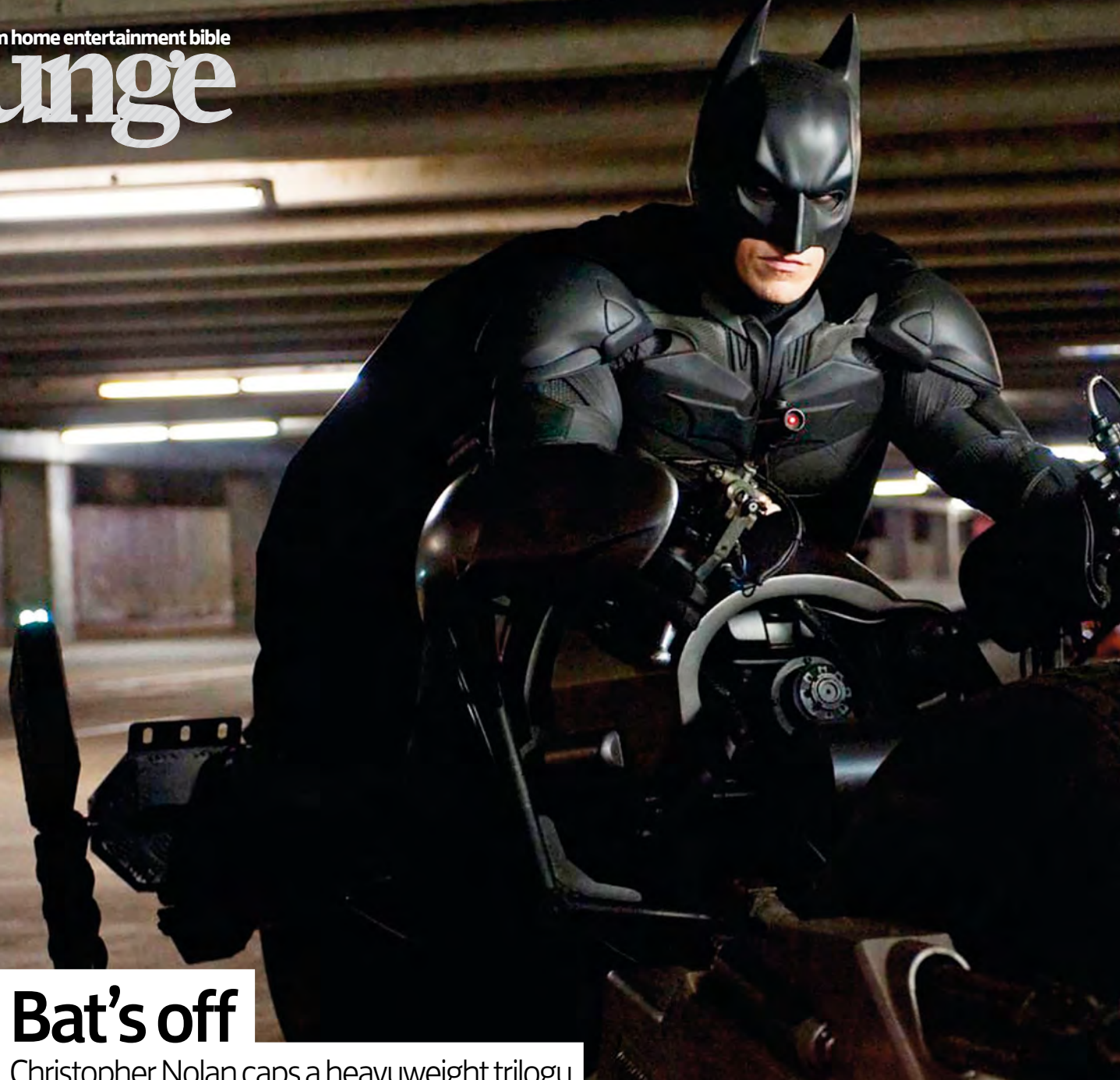
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Disney warrior princess:
Brave, page 129.



Bat's off

Christopher Nolan caps a heavyweight trilogy.

THE DARK KNIGHT RISES ¹²

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 3 DECEMBER DVD, Blu-ray



AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING like genius DoP/*Avengers Assemble* critic Wally Pfister, let's keep this summer's superhero ruckus alive.

Christopher Nolan's trilogy closer lost to Joss Whedon's quip-fire assemblage at the box office, but Christian Bale's comment on *TDKR*'s extras explains why Batman rises above Marvel's spandex sizzler. "We always wanted to show the consequences of what [Bruce Wayne] does."

A sense of consequence barely bothered *Avengers Assemble*, joyful as it was, but Nolan reveres the dramatic clout involved

in having something at stake. In his Gotham, emotional wounds linger, action has heft and moral choices have repercussions lent substance by real-world fears. Is that more than a film about masked men growling at each other can take?

David Cronenberg argued so: "I think it's still Batman running around in a stupid cape." Roll with the pulp punches, though, and Nolan's integrity of narrative and world-building stands as a rich, dense benchmark

of old-school epic storytelling in a climate of weightless CGI spectacle.

So it figures that *The Dark Knight's* climax reverberates in *TDKR*, just as its predecessor ran with Gordon's (Gary Oldman) warning at the end of *Batman Begins* of escalating atrocities. With our hero a shadow of himself, his orphaned heart seared anew by Rachel Dawes' death, Bale delivers his most fragile Wayne yet. And as Gotham's peace wobbles on the fib of Harvey Dent's virtue, so Chris and Jonathan Nolan's script develops the trilogy's themes with microscopic rigour.

TALKING POINT

Christopher gave Jonathan Nolan *The Dark Knight Returns* and *Batman: Year One* graphic novels as birthday presents when they were kids... worked out well, didn't it?

Getting physical

Wayne's wrecked body also rings true, coming from a director who honours the physical impact of in-camera set-pieces. Get past the no commentary, the no deleted



'This is a send-off to celebrate. It'll be a long time before a superhero series inspires like this one'

scenes, and the shameless Joel Schumacher cameo on an exhaustive (and surprisingly moving) Batmobile doc, and Nolan's "done for real" shoot makes for uncommonly thrilling disc featurettes. "It's something that makes us gasp," gasps Tom Hardy of the air hijack shoot. "People actually walked on wings of planes!"

And we gasp again, at footage of the chopper-hoisted Bat, a stadium prepped for levelling and 1,000 extras flooding Wall Street. *TDKR* climaxes in a street war, like *Avengers Assemble*, but Nolan favours reallocating effects money to a "cast of thousands" over CGI. His standard isn't the megaplex: it's the grand-scale Hollywood epic or *Metropolis*, in ways that 2012's Fritz Lang-indebted *Total Recall* can't hope to match.

Bane is the perfect villain for this Gotham, "a necessary evil" wielding the thump of threat needed to give physical and emotional weight to Wayne's live/die choices.

Hardy's stare, muscularity and extravagantly offbeat speech chill: you'd change seats on a night bus to avoid him, then change buses if he started monologuing through that bonkers mask. Bane isn't as famous as the Riddler but he is the villain Gotham needs to close the trilogy, just as second-tier spook the Scarecrow fitted *Batman Begins'* fog of fear.

Nolan's large-scale emotional architecture ensures the twists and turns also pay off the promise of *BB*. Cracking ice, Bruce in a balaclava, falls, climbs, parental traumas, doubles, symbols... the density of echoes repays revisits, though Alfred's memories of baby Bruce land with a tender immediacy rare in such films. Nolan's respect for physical reality extends to his love of flawed human faces: Michael Caine and the gloriously oily Ben Mendelsohn ground *TDKR* as surely as the asphalt grit of Pfister's cinematography.

Bat bike: (main) Bruce Wayne takes chase; (above) Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway) prepares for a prison break.

Here comes the boom

Some expository grunting is required to carry the narrative load, but Nolan knows how to ease the heavy lifting. The cool-shit dial shrieks off the scale for the opening air-jack and new vehicle The Bat's take-off, where weight, propulsion and brisk editing combine to knock the wind out of you.

A little levity helps, the Nolans' script chalking up meta-gags about Bane's sonic boom ("What a lovely, lovely voice") and Selina Kyle's heels, pipping fan-forum grumblers to the post. Offering contrast to the men whose masks ease their hurt, Anne Hathaway makes Kyle a wily manipulatix, her face effortlessly switching registers depending on what the situation demands. In a film that could have bulldozed, she supplies surprise swerves as well as curves.

Ditto Joseph Gordon-Levitt, who doesn't so much act for the camera as dance with it, lending grace to potentially stolid 'last good cop' John Blake. He also figures in the end reveals, which deliver on themes of myth established in *BB*. Just as Blake's dressing-down of Gordon (the "dirty hands" line) introduces the theme of each generation rectifying a previous generation's ills, so the heartfelt climax allows for the idea that each generation will replenish Batman.

Not that *TDKR* is anything so crass as a franchise re-starter: re-authoring Batman as a self-contained story with a beginning, middle and end, Nolan's trilogy (available as a boxset from 3 December) feels like it could be the ground from which all Bat-myths sprung, which isn't bad going for a 73-year-old. But it carries the hint that Batman will always return. That loving nod to the character is a send-off to celebrate, even if it'll be a long time before a superhero series inspires like this one. **Kevin Harley**

EXTRAS

► Extended edition ► Doc ► Featurettes ► Gallery ► Trailers

The original *Captain America* costume was less practical.



SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

FIVE EASY PIECES 1970

Nomadic Jack Nicholson suffers career-change identity crisis, although the only thing stripped is a chicken salad sandwich.

SEX, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE 1989

Audiences flocked to Soderbergh's debut for the salacious title, and stayed for the subtle character portraits.

THE FULL MONTY 1997

A troupe of laid-off steelworkers pioneer cinema's unluckiest subgenre, the socio-political stripper comedy.

Cashed peccs

Crotch thrusts and subtexts? What a package.

MAGIC MIKE 15

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 26 NOVEMBER DVD, Blu-ray



MAGIC MIKE? MORE LIKE MAGIC marketing. Emphasising the hen party appeal, Steven Soderbergh packed them in for weeks en route to a bigger UK box-office haul than *Contagion* and *Haywire* combined. Either seemed a more likely mainstream hit, but memories of *The Full Monty* – and expectations of seeing its stars' assets – won the day.

But were the ladies having too much fun to notice Soderbergh's downbeat credit-crunch satire? Channing Tatum's Mike is the star of the Xquisite Club, but his difficulties off-stage showcase a nimble, nuanced study of recession-hit America.

The metaphor isn't forced; this is just a decent guy who finds the easy money of grinding his crotch into hysterical women's faces too much to resist.

It's a study in frugality and excess, in which Mike's careful straightening of dollar bills can't iron out every last crinkle from the cavalier shower of money thrown at the strippers. He'd rather be investing, but nobody's buying his crazy schemes. So those routines double as an ironic, melancholy echo of his real life, as Mike roleplays various careers – policeman, builder, hoodie'd criminal – but is always stripped back to nothing.

With quiet detachment, Soderbergh observes how Mike slots in between Matthew McConaughey's Dallas – the club owner still eking out his dreams in chapless trousers, who Mike might one day become – and Alex Pettyfer's stripping virgin Adam. Another film might have focused on the cautionary tale of Adam's journey from naive newcomer to shallow jerk. True,

a sorority house party recalls *Boogie Nights* later stretches, yet Reid Carolin's script avoids cliché by focusing on Mike.

Tatum shines in a fragile character study based, in part, on his own pre-fame career as a stripper. Mike is *Five Easy Pieces*' Bobby Dupea with better abs: a soulful, creative type disguising himself as a blue-collar jock. Soderbergh's languid long takes tease out the contradictions, especially during Tatum's conversations with Cody Horn.

In contrast, Pettyfer and McConaughey are playing cartoon characters... but that's the point, giving Tatum something to kick against while sweetening the script's bromides. Pettyfer sacrifices first-act subtlety to play up Adam's superficiality, while a rejuvenated McConaughey drip-feeds the Mephistophelean menace of *Killer Joe* back into his natural laidback groove. The film's most knowing gag sees McConaughey banging on his bongos, keepin' on livin'. No wonder the hens kept throwing their cash at the screen. **Simon Kinnear**

EXTRAS

► Making of ► Extended dance scenes ► Dance party mode

TALKING POINT

The moment Dallas halts his striptease to preserve his dignity was unscribed, the result of overexcited extras ripping Matthew McConaughey's G-string mid-take.



Blu news

Urban legends ...



Judgement time

Some action movies have high-faluting ideas about what they are. Not so Pete Travis' *Dredd*, which proves it knows its pulp onions by obliterating character arcs (and other stuff that bores us too much to type it) and focusing on the good stuff, like lean scripting (Alex Garland) and a drug designed to make action look rad in 3D. In a good year for masked hard nuts (see Bane), Karl Urban looks cool in the Judge's helmet too – and he keeps it on. No news on extras, but we're expecting a recipe for our own narco-rush when it hits the streets with a bloody splash on 14 January.



Rambo V was aimed at a new generation.

Teenage kicks

Hold the poisoned arrows. Pixar's aim holds true.

BRAVE PG

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 26 NOVEMBER DVD, Blu-ray



ON A LIVELY COMMENTARY, the creatives behind Pixar's flawed but robust 13th feature talk about how tough it was to squeeze their wee heroine and her magically enlarged mum into shot together. Worth the effort, though. After all, it's the mum-daughter face-offs that make *Brave* more than a rerun of Disney's *Tangled*, to which critics fired off broad comparisons on release.

If 2010's Rapunzel redux trotted out witch-camp motherhood stereotypes, and past Pixars (*Finding Nemo*, *Monsters Inc*) favoured paternal parables, *Brave* breaks ground. Targeting tensions between Highland Queen Elinor (Emma Thompson) and her wildcat

lassie Merida (Kelly MacDonal), *Brave's* portrait of a loving mum struggling with a tempestuous teenager shows real nuance: with genuine truth in her swings from rage to regret.

Granted, off-screen fall-outs – writer/director Brenda Chapman was 'dropped' – are felt: a castle dust-up is as messy as the end is tidy. Yet the details stay on-target despite the arc's wayward swerves, especially when mum's mid-film transformation sparks shifts in filial relations.

Pixar's textural triumphs dazzle duly: cloth on a target, sun-kissed hair... But the expressivity impresses most, with Merida and Elinor's glances during the uplift scene suggesting that, like the wisps leading Merida to her destiny, Pixar can light the ani-movie way even on an off-day. **Kevin Harley**

EXTRAS

▶ Commentary ▶ Shorts ▶ Extended Scenes
▶ Deleted scenes ▶ Featurettes ▶ Making Of



THE EXPENDABLES 2 15

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 10 DEC DVD, Blu-ray

TAKING ANOTHER SPIN THROUGH THE home for retired action men in his armour-plated mobility scooter, Stallone gets more time to thumb through his contact book as he hands the directing reins to Simon West. Watching Rambo, John McClane and The Terminator spray blood, brains and testosterone all over the walls, it shoots an RPG straight to the heart of your inner 12-year-old boy. If you want story, acting or common sense, look elsewhere. If you want Schwarzenegger, Willis, Statham, Li and Chuck Norris kicking the shit out of JCVD, then turn on, tune out and man up. **Paul Bradshaw**

EXTRAS

▶ Commentary ▶ Featurettes ▶ Deleted scenes
▶ Gag reel



TOTAL RECALL 12

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 26 DEC DVD, Blu-ray

BRIMMING WITH IMPLANTS FROM other movies, Len Wiseman's Philip K Dick via Arnie revisit is a thriller in search of an identity. The focus on a befuddled drone/super-spy (Colin Farrell) is expected, but the future urban sprawl, digi-mayhem and robo-fighters echo *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *I, Robot*... you name it, Len nicks it. Slick as the FX look, the personality shortfall is compounded by casting fails and botched concepts, with Dick's real/fake intrigues incinerated by the noisy climax. Maybe the extended cut (unseen) adds nuance. And maybe Santa is real.

Kevin Harley

EXTRAS

▶ Theatrical/extended cuts ▶ Commentary
▶ Behind the scenes ▶ Gag reel ▶ Featurettes



This means war

Legwarmers, headbands and Kevin Bacon on a tractor. All good, but nothing tickles our '80s nostalgia glands like the combination of nuclear fear, crap computers and the Cold War. We come over all Buck Turgidson when the internet tells us it's 'Not Responding' nowadays, but Matthew Broderick's boy hacker sparks a global countdown to actual Thernonuclear War in John Badham's techno-thriller *War Games*, dropping its BD payload on 7 January. OK, so it's not *Dr Strangelove*, but it's tightly plotted, it co-stars the cool one from *The Breakfast Club* (Ally Sheedy), and it gives good apocalypso-gag. As for extras, expect global incidents if we don't get the full Region 1 haul.

'Details stay on target despite the wayward swerves'



"One of us has to change, and it's not going to be me."

Cult leader

After *Another Earth* comes another winner...

SOUND OF MY VOICE 15

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 26 NOVEMBER DVD, BD



Somewhere between *Martha Marcy May Marlene* and *Looper* lies the innocuous-sounding *Sound Of My Voice* – an intense, thought-provoking and smart thriller which artfully morphs from discombobulating faux-doc to head-fuck time-travel thriller via a potent study of cults. It's a heady and teasing mix for a scrappy little indie made for peanuts, which seemed to be unfairly eclipsed by the more trumpeted *MMMM...* when both premiered at 2011's Sundance Film Festival.

Co-written by director Zal Batmanglij and lead Brit Marling, *SOMV* throws viewers into the attempt by aspiring filmmakers Peter (Christopher Denham) and Lorna (Nicole Vicious) to infiltrate a cult led by ethereal beauty Maggie (Marling, brilliant), who claims to be from the year 2054. Charismatic and psychologically dextrous, can the two sceptics unveil her? And more pertinently, resist her?

While the similarly-themed but showier *The Master* is collecting star ratings like acolytes, it's worth seeking out this grittier, more seductive look at the mechanics of cult devotion. Watching scenes in which Maggie bullies, breaks and beguiles her subjects to the point of vomiting is powerfully and morbidly fascinating, while the script's clever twists leave audience alliances all at sea. Who is taking advantage of whom?

Though the third act gear-change that introduces more questions than answers may frustrate some (Batmanglij has hinted at making further explanatory films within the universe), and an unresolved ending could be interpreted as concepts run aground, those open to surrendering themselves to the process of this sect are promised – if not salvation – an exhilarating experience. **Jane Crowther**

EXTRAS

► Making of ► Featurette



ICE AGE 4: CONTINENTAL DRIFT U

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 10 DEC DVD, Blu-ray, 3D

A DECADE AND THREE SEQUELS since the original *Ice Age*, the next stage of Earth's natural history sees the gang threatened with separation anxiety on a global scale. With a tone that swerves between madcap adventure and sitcom domesticity, the saga is starting to resemble a cartoon *Lethal Weapon*. The rollicks are revived once the heroes bump into a band of prehistoric pirates, but squirrel *Scrat* – the Buster Keaton of modern animated characters – remains the real star. **Simon Kinnear**

EXTRAS

► Featurettes ► Music ► Deleted scenes
► Sing-along mode



NEW YEAR'S EVE 12

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 3 DEC DVD, Blu-ray

VALENTINE'S DAY HELMER GARRY Marshall brings together another star cast for another multi-stranded rom-com built around another corny calendar fixture. Sentimental subplots involving festivities organiser Hilary Swank, cancer patient Robert De Niro and a pregnant Jessica Biel only prove that a film really can be less than the sum of its parts. Worth watching to see which member of the cast can be most poorly served, it's an object lesson in mawkish manipulation and cynical box-ticking. **Neil Smith**

EXTRAS

► Commentary ► Deleted scenes
► Featurettes ► Gag reel



UNDEFEATED E

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT NOW DVD

A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT A HIGH school American football team... no, wait, come back! The kids in *Undeclared* could just have easily have been in a rock band or a science tournament, because it's not really about sports, it's about hope – as one coach attempts to bring discipline and pride to an unruly gaggle of teens struggling with a poverty-stricken hometown, absent fathers and uncertain futures. With sentimentality kept to a minimum, the result will inspire even the most sports-phobic to cheer them on. **Emma Johnston**

EXTRAS

► None



THE WATCH 15

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

OUT 26 DEC DVD, Blu-ray

RELEASED AND RENAMED IN THE wake of a fatal neighbourhood watch shooting in the US, this ill-timed comedy struggles to wring laughter from its tale of suburban vigilantes who discover a spate of local killings is the work of alien interlopers. OK, so *TF* columnist Richard Ayoade doesn't fare too badly as the nerdiest of the quartet assembled by Costco manager Ben Stiller. Vince Vaughn, alas, is obnoxious incarnate as their shouty chum in a film that resembles *Attack The Block's* sloppy seconds. **Neil Smith**

EXTRAS

► Deleted scenes ► Featurettes ► Gag reel
► Trailer



JAY AND SILENT BOB GET OLD: TEA BAGGING IN THE UK 18

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD

TAKING THEIR LIVE 'SMODCAST' ON TOUR, Kevin Smith and Jason Mews bring their filthy sit-down stand-up routine to the UK. Nothing's changed much since *Clerks*, with the middle-aged stoners talking dirty about movies, comics and sex positions. Topics include Captain America on crack, where to buy plus-size kilts and farting in bed – but mostly they talk about fucking. Fucking elves, fucking cockneys, fucking friends, fucking gremlins, fucking William Wallace, fucking Angela Lansbury and fucking Jason Mews. Funny, but after four hours it's a bit fucking much. **Paul Bradshaw**

EXTRAS

▶ Deleted scenes ▶ Trailer



A FEW BEST MEN 15

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras N/A

OUT 26 DEC DVD

AFTER A BEACH-RESORT GETAWAY, mild-mannered Londoner David (Xavier Samuel) shocks his mates by returning engaged. Enlisting the catastrophic trio (smarmy Kris Marshall; Hitler-haired Kevin Bishop; whiny, booze-sodden Tim Draxl) as best men, he jets off to Australia for his wedding to senator's daughter Mia (Laura Brent). It's not long before all hell breaks loose at the prim affair. Stephen Elliott's (*Priscilla Queen Of The Desert*) crude-com tries but fails to be *The Hangover* Down Under; its contrived gag set-ups (a prized ram in drag, a gimp mask and even Olivia Newton-John on coke) paying off with minimal laughs. **Carmen Gray**

EXTRAS

▶ TBC



A SIMPLE LIFE PG

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD, Blu-ray

HONG KONG DIRECTOR ANN HUI'S intimate and affecting tale of the bond forged between middle-aged film producer Roger (*House Of Flying Daggers*' Andy Lau) and his family's elderly servant Ah Tao (Deanie Ip) when a stroke forces her into a nursing home, is undeniably a slow-burner. Yet its gentle pace, and a watchful documentary style that doesn't shirk the indignities or the pleasures of old age, keep the drama tender rather than tear-jerking. Ip (Lau's godmother in real life) is particularly riveting, giving a delicate, dogged portrayal of a woman learning to receive love just as life is receding.

Kate Stables

EXTRAS

▶ Making Of



LONDON: THE MODERN BABYLON 15

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD

SCORING A SIZZLING OPENING MONTAGE with The Clash's 'London Calling' is just about the only obvious choice in Julien Temple's scintillating study of the English capital. Assembling a wealth of archive footage, Temple takes us from turn-of-the-century Imperialism via the Blitz and Swinging London to Thatcherism and the recent riots. Provocative and poignant, energised by a terrific score and contributors ranging from Tony Benn to aged Hackney residents, it's endlessly fascinating. To paraphrase Samuel Johnson, if you tire of this film, then you're tired of life. **James Mottram**

EXTRAS

▶ Booklet ▶ Trailer ▶ Interview



KEITH LEMON: THE FILM 18

Film ★☆☆☆☆ Extras N/A

OUT 10 DEC DVD, Blu-ray

THERE ARE CHANNEL 4 DISPATCHES documentaries funnier than *Keith Lemon: The Film*, a project that proves *Jurassic Park* right: just because you could, doesn't mean you should. Keith Lemon's rags-to-riches rise is the thin excuse for Leigh Francis' creation – a Frankenstein's monster of crass vulgarity – to bumble through a script of fart/knob gags that is so moronic, even Ralph Wiggum would request a refund. Combine with a desperate array of cameos and an ITV2 concept that feels woefully out of its depth at film length, and you've got a reet bang tidy tragedy. **Stephen Kelly**

EXTRAS

▶ TBC



IN YOUR HANDS 15

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT 26 NOV DVD, Blu-ray

KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS, FRENCH cinema's first choice for lonely, well-dressed but emotionally flayed women, gives a luminous performance as the kidnapped Parisian doctor who becomes entangled with a volatile abductor bent on payback for his personal tragedy. Sadly, glowering hunk Pio Marmai can't punch at her weight, which makes their intense, two-handed scenes feel cruelly lop-sided and a tad stagey. As a result, Lola Doillon's taut but insufficiently twisty thriller strains for the heart-wringing arthouse heft of Scott Thomas hits like *I've Loved You So Long* and *Leaving*, but finds itself falling some way short. **Kate Stables**

EXTRAS

▶ Trailer

Three more

Wimpy kids, dancing kids, incarcerated kids.



DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: DOG DAYS U

Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT 26 NOV DVD, Blu-ray
School's out and all Greg (Zachary Gordon) wants to do is play with his joypad. But fate has other plans in another amiable if episodic trawl through the embarrassments of being a tween-ager. **ML**



KING OF DEVIL'S ISLAND 12

Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras ★☆☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD, Blu-ray
In 1915, two inmates are brought to a prison island for juvenile delinquents off the Norwegian coast. Marius Holst's film ticks most of the prison-movie boxes but unfurls with a convincing immediacy. **PK**



STEP UP 4: MIAMI HEAT 12

Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras N/A

OUT 3 DEC DVD, Blu-ray
The 3D dance-off takes abs-porn to new heights in an '80s-esque story pitting big-hearted dancers against an evil land-baron. Not as good as *Xanadu*, but just as dumb. **KM**

How not to act
when going through
airport security.



Spy fall

Renner's action hero is too cool to rule.

THE BOURNE LEGACY 12

Film ★★☆☆☆ Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT 3 DECEMBER DVD, Blu-ray



HOW DO YOU MAKE A BOND film without Bond? Simple answer: you don't. But for all the comparisons that have been drawn between the two stony-faced spies, it turns out long-time franchise scribe Tony Gilroy sees no problem in making a Bourne without Bourne.

Replacing Matt Damon is Jeremy Renner as Aaron Cross, a CIA-bred super-soldier jonesing for his meds and running for his life, after his bosses (led by Edward Norton's sinister suit) turn on him. But don't call it a reboot – it's a continuation of the franchise, albeit one with an entirely new lead and set of supporting characters, not to mention a somewhat diluted visual style.

With less of the kinetic Paul Greengrass editing, and none of the placid, character-focused shots Doug Liman employed, what's left is a visually uninspiring and frequently tedious actioner that's in search of its own identity.

Renner's a compelling leading man and conveys powder-keg intensity with the best of them, but he's not a warm actor in the way Damon is, and he can't bring much colour to what's essentially a grey-scale cadaver of a role. Cross' plight simply isn't

an emotionally compelling one: he's a junkie looking for a quick fix, and while there's a token effort made to give his addiction a sympathetic root, it's too little too late.

Even Rachel Weisz's cerebral presence as shrieking damsel doctor-turned-love interest does little to make his arc resonate. There's a tender scene around the halfway point that momentarily fools you into thinking the pair might have something in the way of real chemistry, but things go sharply downhill from that point, culminating in one of the most ridiculous set-pieces of the year.

Meanwhile Norton's stuck in a series of repetitive exposition scenes in which corporate baddies bark jargon into headsets and glare ominously at computer screens. If this is Bourne's legacy, no wonder Damon jumped ship.

DVD extras include a thoughtful if overcrowded chat track with Gilroy and various behind-the-scenes bods, some by-the-numbers featurettes and a bunch of deleted scenes that are mostly best left deleted. **Emma Dibdin**

EXTRAS

► Commentary ► Deleted scenes ► Featurettes

Three more

Roller disco, Danish scandal and Dolly Parton.



SKATELAND 12

Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD, BD
Swapping *Adventureland*'s rides for rollerskates, Anthony Burns' early '80s coming-of-age soap is a likeable indie that retreads old ground. It dips into mopey melodrama, but the personal touches keep things sweet. **PB**



JOYFUL NOISE PG

Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras TBC

OUT NOW DVD
The clichés quickly stack up in Todd Graff's musical, and Queen Latifah butting heads with Dolly Parton for control of a church choir is nowhere near as much fun as it should be. Only the songs create standout moments. **MC**



A ROYAL AFFAIR 15

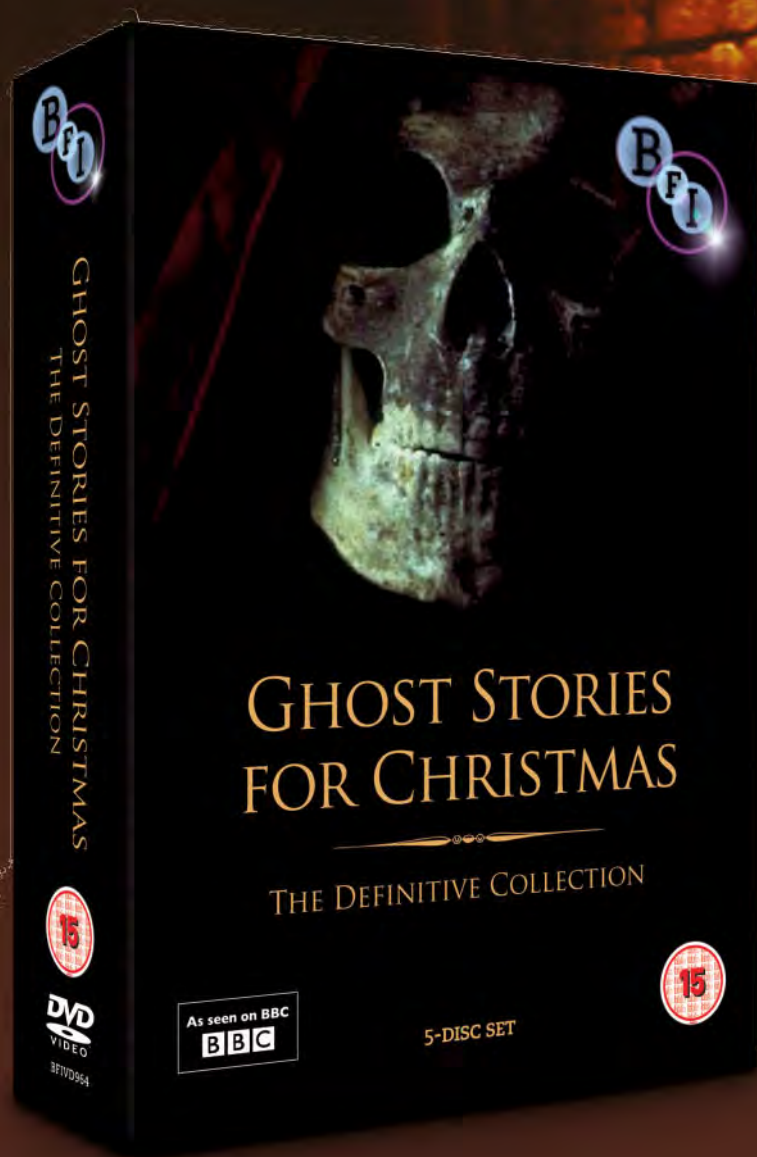
Film ★★☆☆☆

Extras ★★☆☆☆

OUT NOW DVD, BD
A barmy king, a lonely queen, a friendly physician... retelling Denmark's biggest royal scandal, Nikolaj Arceel's suspenseful frock opera deploys a modern touch without going all Baz Lurhmann. **ML**



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TARANTINO XX: 8-FILM COLLECTION 18

Films ★★★★★ Extras N/A

1992-2009 OUT 26 NOVEMBER Blu-ray



I DON'T WANT MY FILMS to be disposable," declared Quentin Tarantino in 1994. "I hope they last for hundreds of years." This Blu-ray survey of his first two decades is a good way to go about that, even if it omits a couple of titles one might expect to feature in a definitive chronicle of the maverick auteur's oeuvre.

OK, so nobody will miss *Four Rooms*. But there is an argument to be made for the Tarantino-scripted *From Dusk Till Dawn* to be included, along with – sorry, Quentin – the Oliver Stone opus *Natural Born Killers* he has so strenuously disowned. Minor titles they

may be compared to *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, the twin pillars on which the big-chinned geek built his reputation. Much as he would wish to deny it, though, they are part of the Tarantino story – one that's sure to be retold more than once in the build-up to *Django Unchained*.

Tarantino XX is ahead of the curve in this respect, accompanying the eight movies it contains with five hours of bonus material spread over a pair of discs. Neither '20 Years Of Filmmaking' nor 'Critics

Corner' – billed as an "in-depth critics' discussion piece exploring the impact of one of the most influential writers/directors of our time" – were available at press time. Together with the deluge of commentaries, featurettes and interviews to be found on the individual Blu-ray, though, they should leave any self-respecting Quentin fan feeling more than sated, especially if they've only previously owned his work on plain old, extras-lite DVD.

Ill manners

No doubt they'll find re-watching *True Romance* particularly poignant in the wake of Tony Scott's suicide, an inexplicable tragedy sure to lend an additional resonance to one of Tarantino's more overtly autobiographical screenplays. (What is Christian Slater's

TALKING POINT

Pulp Fiction isn't the only film here to benefit from Quentin's understated thesping. He's also to be seen as Mr Brown in *Reservoir Dogs* and as bar owner Warren in *Death Proof*.



film-mad nerd Clarence if not an idealised self-portrait?) While not directed by Quentin himself, *Romance* was crucial pre-*Fiction* in showing the eye-catching *Dogs* was no flash in the pan. Not only that, but it also features one of the quintessential QT stand-offs: a dazzling duologue between Christopher Walken's dead-eyed mafiosi and Dennis Hopper's ex-copper Clifford that pivots on the latter's assertion that the former was "spawned by niggers".

Like that word? Good, because you'll be hearing a lot of it. It's all over *Pulp Fiction* for one, most obviously in the speech delivered by the director himself in a cameo role as gourmet coffee drinker Jimmie. And it's also a favourite of *Reservoir's* Mr Pink, *Jackie Brown's* Ordell Robbie and Tracie Thoms in *Death Proof*. Maybe Spike Lee had a point when he took Tarantino to task in 1997

for his "infatuation" with the racial epithet. As quirks go, this is practically a fetish.

Then again, why pick up on this and not his splattery violence, his casual misogyny or his puerile homophobia? Whatever you say about the Knoxville native, he's nothing if not an equal opportunities offender. Tarantino creates extreme characters who operate in a heightened universe, one in which life is cheap, gore is cool and it's always good to talk. (And not only in English either. Some of his finest scenes – the lengthy tavern set-piece in *Inglourious Basterds*, for example, or any sequence featuring Lucy Liu's O-Ren Ishii in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* – rely extensively on subtitled dialogue.) Isn't the N-word just one more tool in his arsenal, a confrontational battery that also includes ear-slicing, eyeball-gouging and swastikas carved on Nazi foreheads?

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Dated and rated...

RESERVOIR DOGS
1992 ★★★★★

TRUE ROMANCE
1993 ★★★★★

PULP FICTION
1994 ★★★★★

JACKIE BROWN
1997 ★★★★★

KILL BILL: VOL. 1
2003 ★★★★★

KILL BILL: VOL. 2
2004 ★★★★★

DEATH PROOF
2007 ★★★

INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS
2009 ★★★★★

Tarantino's hits: (from far right) *Kill Bill Vol. 1* (2002); *Death Proof* (2007); *Inglourious Basterds* (2009).



Who da fan?

Besides, it's not as if it's the only recurring signifier. Indeed, if this collection reveals anything, it's Tarantino's skill at assembling a personal repertory company of players perfectly in tune with his cinema-literate, pop culture-savvy sensibility. Sam Jackson, Tim Roth and Uma Thurman are among the faces you'll see more than once, pausing en route to give some of the most memorable performances in their respective careers. (That Jackson left the Shrine Auditorium in March 1995 without a Golden Balldie in his grasp must surely rank as one of the all-time Oscar oversights.)

Just as significant, though, is Quentin's ability to resurrect, with the likes of John Travolta, Robert Forster and Pam Grier all experiencing Lazarus-style comebacks thanks to his unshakeable belief in their undimmed talent. He can make stars too, transforming Ving Rhames from bit-partner to Hollywood staple in *Fiction* and steering Christoph Waltz to global acclaim and a best supporting actor Oscar with *Inglourious*.

For all the pleasures this set affords, though, a niggle lingers. Is Quentin his own man, or is he the product of all the films he has so voraciously consumed? *Dogs* arguably owes as much to Ringo Lam's *City On Fire* as it does to its director, while *Jackie*, *Death Proof*, *Basterds* and the *Bills* are essentially pastiches of moribund genres (blaxploitation, grindhouse, war, kung fu). Will Tarantino ever make an original movie, or is he destined to feast on and regurgitate the output of others? Maybe we'll find out in due course – after *Django Unchained* that is, a spaghetti western that takes its name from an Italian gun-slinging icon. **Neil Smith**

EXTRAS

> Commentaries > Deleted and alternate scenes
> Documentaries > Featurettes > Galleries
> Interviews > Trailers



Family reunion

An offer we still can't refuse...

THE GODFATHER 40TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION 15

Films ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1972-90 **OUT NOW** BLU-RAY

ONLY SEVEN STORYLINES EXIST in fiction. Whether you believe this old chestnut or not, it's undeniably true that "good man becomes bad man" is one of the oldest and best-worn arcs of all. You can, if you feel so inclined, trace it from Oedipus and Hamlet all the way through to current hot-ticket drama *Breaking Bad*, and Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* trilogy is the best and most intricate big-screen rendering.

It's family loyalty that undoes Michael Corleone (Al Pacino), the wayward mob son who becomes reluctantly dragged into the family business after an assassination attempt on his father (Marlon Brando). Pacino's astonishing performance has become known so well for its later turns that it's easy to forget just how convincing he is as a doe-eyed young idealist. No matter how inevitable his decline, it holds the

In the '70s, beige was the colour of danger.

same devastating thrill on the 50th watch as it does on the first.

Coppola and novelist Mario Puzo's screenplay is peppered with pithy, emotionally specific character beats that make this sprawling world feel almost instantly familiar. Carlo and Connie's wedding sequence is deceptively simple, but tells you something crucial about almost every character, while Michael's realisation that his hands aren't shaking in the hospital is as powerful as, "I know it was you, Fredo. You broke my heart." As quotable as the trilogy is, its resounding power lies as much in its unspoken moments.

But you know all this already. Here's something new – *Part III*? It really isn't all that bad. Yes, it's nonsensical as a standalone film and yes, Sofia should probably stay behind the camera. But Coppola himself has suggested it's more of an

epilogue than a true third part, and on that basis it works, providing the necessary fall after the first two films' rise.

While much of the behind-the-scenes material isn't new, it's all been remastered to match the films' shiny new coat, and in any case it's tough to improve on Coppola's candid, intimate chat tracks. Another oldie-but-goodie is the *Godfather World* featurette, which sees talking heads from *The Sopranos* creator David Chase to Alec Baldwin discussing the trilogy's cultural significance.

New bits include a copy of the original *Godfather* shooting script, some previously unseen behind-the-scenes photography, and post-production featurette *When The Shooting Stopped*, which digs up some surprising nuggets. But the jewel in this box-set crown quite rightly remains the three films themselves: remastered to a ravishing standard and pivoting, for all their vastness, on one man's small, sad fall from grace.

Emma Dibdin

EXTRAS

► Commentaries ► Featurettes ► Behind-the scenes photography ► Original shooting script

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA 1984
Sergio Leone turned down the *Godfather* gig to direct his own sprawling Italian crime epic.

DONNIE BRASCO 1997

Johnny Depp's undercover cop finds himself becoming genuinely loyal to Al Pacino's aging mob boss.

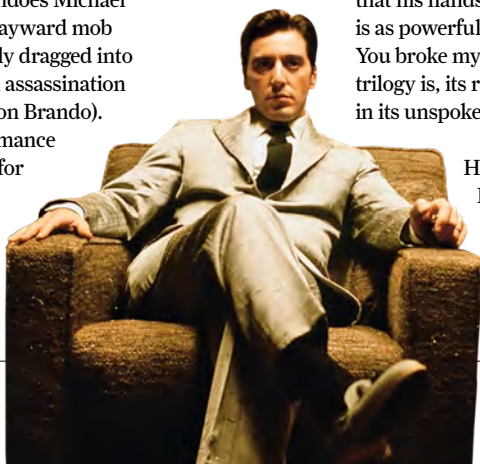
THE SOPRANOS 1999-2007

Modern-day New Jersey mob boss Tony Soprano navigates the pitfalls of his lifestyle.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews

TALKING POINT

Told that Coppola wanted Vito Corleone to resemble a bulldog, Marlon Brando stuffed cotton wool into his cheeks for the audition. Insert your own Brando weight-gain gag here.





Maybe if she pretended to be asleep he would just go away.

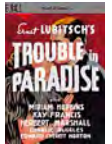
Smooth criminals

A touch of romcom class from light fingers Lubitsch.

TROUBLE IN PARADISE **U**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1932 **OUT NOW** DVD



HITCHCOCK OFFERED SUSPENSE. John Ford did Westerns. Ernst Lubitsch had a 'touch.' If you're wondering why critics still use the latter piece of short-hand, *Trouble In Paradise* offers explanation. One of the most exquisitely timed comedies ever made, its craftsmanship remains precise even 80 years on – a Rolex where most modern romcoms are market-stall knock-offs.

The action begins in Venice, where crooks Gaston Monescu (Herbert Marshall) and Lily (Miriam Hopkins) fall in love while trying to rob each other blind. Fast forward several months: now in Paris, the duo plans to divest wealthy Madame Colet (Kay Francis) of her fortune, until Gaston's con-man routine starts to blur into real feelings for his target.

Such a set-up wasn't unusual at Paramount, the home of Continental glamour in '30s Hollywood, but Lubitsch

sneaks in so much satire the film is almost a joke at the expense of its studio. It's a story of shifting identities, in which the idle rich are indistinguishable from the thieves, dishonesty is the key to maintaining a stable relationship, and 'sex appeal' lies in money, until you discover the real thing.

The result is subversive and innuendo-packed, but oh-so-discreet. That's the Lubitsch touch: teasing but tactful as Gaston's and Colet's shadows fall across a bed while they're trading flirtatious bon mots. The touch is maintained by Samson Raphaelson's pH neutral dialogue, tart with acidic barbs but balanced by a delightfully alkaline frothiness, and performances that thrive on the contradictions – the central pairing of saucy Hopkins and urbane Brit Marshall smoulders with unlikely, but undisguised, heat. **Simon Kinnear**

EXTRAS

▶ Booklet ▶ Critics in conversation



OUTSKIRTS **PG** BY THE BLUEST OF SEAS **U**

Films ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1933/36 **OUT NOW** DVD

FROM BORIS BARNET, FORGOTTEN master of Soviet cinema, come two of his best films. *Outskirts* (aka *Okraina/Patriots*) is a Chekhovian study of life in a provincial town just prior to the Revolution. In *By The Bluest Of Seas*, two shipwrecked sailors are washed up on an idyllic Communist island and fall in love with the same woman. Barnett's gentle lyricism and reluctance to propagandise separate him from the tub-thumping mainstream of Soviet cinema, but make him all the more appealing. **Philip Kemp**

EXTRAS

▶ None



SANTA SANGRE **18**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1989 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD

THE MOST ACCESSIBLE FILM BY Mexican avant-garde auteur Alejandro Jodorowsky, his horror head-scratcher divides its time between the sanitarium and the circus. Fenix is a mini-magician whose knife-throwing dad cheats on his trapeze-artist mother. Cue arm-losing murders, dismembered elephants, religious ecstasies, dwarves and mambo musical interludes. Whether it's the work of a surrealist cine-poet or an emperor needing new clothes is an issue the abundant extras fail to clarify. **Matt Glasby**

EXTRAS

▶ Documentary ▶ Deleted scenes
▶ Commentary



LA GLOIRE DE MON PERE/LE CHATEAU DE MA MERE **U**

Films ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1990 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD

YVES ROBERT'S RURAL FRENCH adventures get the HD overhaul, now looking even more like *The Darling Buds Of May*. *La Gloire De Mon Père* takes us to Marseille in 1900, where Philippe Caubère's holiday with his son takes in lessons in butterfly ownership and how to wash with a hosepipe. *Le Château De Ma Mère* is even cuter: a boy-meets-girl story (where the girl makes the boy eat crickets). This hit of continental nostalgia should chase away any rain clouds. **George Bass**

EXTRAS

▶ Interviews ▶ Making Of



THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION **15**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1994 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD

FRANK DARABONT'S PRISON DRAMA frequently tops personal favourite lists, and you'll remember why when you watch it again – with few other movies leaving you quite as warm and fuzzy inside. Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman give career-defining performances and the ending still melts the hardest of hearts. Handsomely transferred to Blu-ray with a stack of new extras, it's the perfect excuse to get the tissues out again. **Paul Bradshaw**

EXTRAS

▶ Commentary ▶ Location footage
▶ Biographies ▶ Documentary ▶ Featurettes
▶ Stills ▶ Storyboards ▶ Interviews

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

RAINING STONES
1993

An avowed Dardenne favourite, Ken Loach's Lancashire family saga is awash with humanity and humour.

BICYCLE THIEVES
1948

The Kid After A Bike? Father and son search for a stolen cycle in this neo-realist classic.

THE 400 BLOWS
1959

A young boy turns to petty crime in François Truffaut's seminal study of adolescent angst.

For full reviews of these films visit totalfilm.com/cinema_reviews



Brotherly love

Keep it real with the Cannes heroes...

The new Mothercare ads went for the derelict look.

THE DARDENNES COLLECTION 15

Films ★★★★★ Extras ★☆☆☆☆

1996-2012 **OUT 10 DEC** DVD



IT'S BY NO MEANS EXHAUSTIVE but it seems apt that this six film-strong Dardenne brothers boxset begins with 1996's *La Promesse*. A story of a boy who promises to look after the family of an immigrant who dies on his father's building site, it's the moment where Belgian siblings Jean-Pierre and Luc began to fulfil their own – ahem – promise, setting them on a path towards becoming a dominant force in contemporary world cinema.

TALKING POINT

Since *La Promesse*, the Dardenne brothers have worked with the same key crew, including DoP Alain Marcoen, and editor Marie-Hélène Dozo.

Think on it: not only did it unite them for the first time with two of the most important actors in their oeuvre, Olivier Gourmet and a then-teenage Jérémie Renier. It also set

down a recognisable filmmaking manifesto of low-budget, low-key realism that would make Ken Loach smile. With their dispassionate camera patrolling the blue-collar environs of Seraing, the Belgian steel town where so many of their films are set, it also dug into what is now familiar thematic turf: the moral bonds and burdens faced by the young.

It's a notion revisited in *Rosetta*, their career-making Cannes-winner from 1999, in which Émilie Dequenne gives a searing turn as a teenager living in a caravan park with her alcoholic mother. Likewise, *The Son* (2002), a sumptuous example of the Dardenne brothers' ability to mine tension from gestures and glances, builds on the relationship between Gourmet's joiner and his teenage apprentice.

By the time of *The Child* (2005), in which Renier's desperate struggler conspires to sell his newborn son for money, the Dardenne brothers' status was fully assured, putting them in that elite group that has won the coveted Palme d'Or twice. Detractors might have argued that their work lacked adventure ("We do what we know how to," counters Luc) but the film's pivotal moped chase, which is every bit as tense as anything Hollywood could ever contrive, proves otherwise.

If there is a misstep, it would be *The Silence Of Lorna*, the brothers' 2008 tale of Albanian immigrants looking for citizenship, which loses focus in its woodland-set conclusion. But it was only a minor stumble in an otherwise masterful body-of-work, as proved by their latest, *The Kid With A Bike*, where the Dardenne brothers coax a gem of a turn from Thomas Doret, love-starved son to Renier's feckless father. The only disappointment here is the poor selection of extras. **James Mottram**

EXTRAS

► Gallery ► Interviews ► Biographies



ÊTRE ET AVOIR **U**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

2002 **OUT NOW** BD

NICOLAS PHILIBERT'S LOVING ACCOUNT of a year in a tiny French primary school high in the Auvergne watches as the school's sole teacher Georges Lopez guides, encourages and occasionally gently chides the children in his care. Nothing extraordinary happens: no major crisis, no dramatic climax, just one small scuffle. Which is precisely the film's strength. This is Lopez doing, with patience, persistence and quiet dedication, just what he's always done. In a heartening film, the only downside is his announcement of imminent retirement. Future generations of kids will be lucky to find such a mentor.

Philip Kemp

EXTRAS

► Interview ► Masterclass ► Trailer



THE COLDITZ STORY **U**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1955 **OUT 10 DEC** BD

GUY HAMILTON'S ARCHETYPAL BRITISH POW drama, based on real-life memoirs of Major Pat Reid (John Mills), paved the way for the long-running TV series. A jokey, public-school tone pervades this Boys' Own yarn, which wastes its imposing setting, and suggests that nationalities such as the Poles and the French ("blasted Frogs") fundamentally can't be trusted in the business of escaping from the Germans. If you're looking for a film to explore the psychological impact of imprisonment and the nature of male friendships in this environment, (re)watch Jean Renoir's magnificent *La Grande Illusion*. Dreary documentary extra. **Tom Dawson**

EXTRAS

► Documentary



THE MAN IN THE WHITE SUIT **U**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1951 **OUT NOW** BD

THE MOST POLITICAL OF EALING'S comedies, Alexander Mackendrick's sardonic satire pits a brilliant but naive scientist (Alec Guinness) against all the vested interests of British industry, bosses and workers alike. He's first dismissed as a madman, then hailed as a genius – when his indestructible cloth threatens the textile industry with ruin he's hunted through the streets of a northern mill town by a lynch-mob. Mackendrick slyly skewers every political stance along the spectrum from Left to Right. A crisp restoration, with generous extras. **Philip Kemp**

EXTRAS

► Interviews ► Stills gallery

► Restoration examples ► Trailer



THE COMPANY OF WOLVES **18**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1984 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD

LONG BEFORE AMANDA SEYFRIED romanced with wolves, Neil Jordan drew on Angela Carter's short stories for a deeper, darker dip into fairy-tales. Dreamier, too: Jordan uses a girl's (Sarah Patterson) feverish fantasies as the leap-off point for a puberty parable set in a village haunted by panting wolves. Its bite is softened by the self-awareness of stories within stories, but the skin-tearing transformation scenes look suitably red in tooth'n'claw on BD, the settings brim with atmosphere and Angela Lansbury serves up her homily-dishing granny with beady-eyed relish. Meaty commentary, too. **Kevin Harley**

EXTRAS

► Commentary



MAÎTRESSE **18**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1976 **OUT NOW** Dual Format

IN BARBET SCHROEDER'S UPMARKET kink-fest a brash young provincial lad (Gérard Depardieu) invades the apartment of a classy Parisian dominatrix (Bulle Ogier), who takes him on as her assistant and bedfellow. Back in 1976 it alarmed the UK censor ("a bizarre and depressing experience," noted one examiner), and was heavily cut for a limited release. Today, even totally uncut, it seems gentle, almost cosy. Ogier is rather too fluffy to convince as a domme, and her attachment to Depardieu's character never rings true. Fine performances, though, from the team of real-life masochists Schroeder recruited via a genuine Parisian domme. **Philip Kemp**

EXTRAS

► Featurette ► Trailers



SOUTHERN COMFORT **15**

Film ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1981 **OUT 26 NOV** DVD, BD

A PERFECT PARTNER TO *DELIVERANCE*, Walter Hill's gruff urbanoia flick follows a troupe of National Guardsmen (including Powers Boothe and Keith Carradine) as they swap "beating up on college kids and tear-gassing niggers" for military exercises in the moody Louisiana bayous. Soon, they're under attack from the indigenous Cajuns and hopelessly out of their depth. Benefiting from tough-as-nuts performances and Ry Cooder's evocative score, the film offers inescapable echoes of Vietnam, a charge Hill still dodges during the lively, if stingy Making Of. Apparently, he told the cast: "If I catch anybody playing a metaphor, they're fired!" **Matt Glasby**

EXTRAS

► Making Of

The rest

Hoodlums and demons and threesomes, oh my!



RAILROADED! **TBC**

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

1947 **OUT NOW** BD

Two hoods cock-up their stick-up then frame some schmuck for it. Anthony Mann's noir is a dry run for later gems like *T-Men*, but it's hard, fast, lovingly underlit and there's some kinky business involving perfumed bullets. **ML**



CÉSAR ET ROSALIE **12**

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

1972 **OUT NOW** DVD, BD

Free-spirit Rosalie is torn between a businessman and a comic-book artist in Claude Sautet's romantic drama. Propelled by fine performances, it's a fleet affair with echoes of *Jules Et Jim*. **TD**



THE NIGHT CHILD **15**

Film ★★★★★

Extras ★★★★★

1975 **OUT NOW** DVD

Riffing on/ripping off *The Exorcist*, Massimo Dallamano's kitschy horror follows a documentary filmmaker on the trail of a demonic painting. The Euro-cheese crimes are forgivable, the dragging pace is a cardinal sin. **MG**



TV

Slick city

On set with season one of gangsters'n'gun-slingers drama Vegas.

IF A TRIP TO THE STRIP is good enough for Prince Harry and his chums, it's certainly good enough for *Total Film*. Unfortunately, this assignment does not involve a jaunt to the actual Las Vegas. Through the magic of television – and some very lavish set design – Sin City, circa 1960, has been recreated 225 miles away, in Santa Clarita, just outside Los Angeles, for the hotly anticipated Sky Atlantic series *Vegas*.

TALKING POINT

The pilot episode of *Vegas* was shot in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and another Las Vegas – all in New Mexico. Filming in Las Vegas, Nevada, was impossible as Fremont Street has been redeveloped since the 1960s.

“None of the major studios’ sound stages had enough space to build on the scale we needed,” explains executive producer Greg Walker, as he points out the famous landmarks of Fremont Street, which became the city’s “casino corridor” and was

recreated with precise historical accuracy for the series in just seven weeks, by a team of 75 carpenters, painters and electricians. “This was the only place in the Los Angeles metro area where we could actually find enough physical space to build Fremont Street,” says Walker.

Set on the cusp of the city’s evolution from the Old West into the gambling mecca we know today, the show stars Dennis Quaid as Ralph Lamb (a real-life figure in Vegas history), a rancher, rodeo rider and former military police officer drafted in to act as sheriff of Clark County after the governor of Nevada’s niece is found dead in the desert. Lamb reluctantly agrees, and recruits his brother Jack (Jason O’Mara) and son Dixon (Taylor Handley) to assist him.

With the city acting as a magnet for all manner of ambitious ne’er-do-wells, Lamb soon crosses paths with Vincent Savino, played by Michael Chiklis, a Chicago mobster newly arrived in Las Vegas who is keen to claim a piece of the soon-to-be boomtown. Expect plenty of high-quality gangsters and gun-slinging, as the script

‘There was such vibrancy, optimism, exploration and sexiness in the air then’

is written by Nicholas Pileggi, the creator of *GoodFellas* and *Casino*.

I Lamb the law

Along the set’s 170ft block of vintage Vegas, the Golden Nugget Gambling Hall screams



What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas: (main) Dennis Quaid does out some desert justice; (below) with screen-brother Jason O'Mara.



its name in neon lights, and beyond it is the entrance to the fictional Savoy hotel, which Savino now runs. No detail has been spared in the 15,000sq ft, full-scale Savoy casino, complete with chandeliers, vintage slot machines and period roulette tables. The set, which also includes a pawn shop, a bingo hall, a jail and the Sheriff's station, cost \$1.8 million to build, and is unusually ambitious for US network television (*Vegas* is made by CBS).

The next morning, in a modern-day hotel in Los Angeles, *Total Film* meets Quaid, still strapping and ruggedly handsome at 58 years old. "Ralph had quite a life, and that was certainly part of the attraction," he says of the decision to take on his first television role since the '70s. "He was the sheriff of Las Vegas for 20

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED...

GOODFELLAS 1990
Written by Vegas scriptwriter Nicholas Pileggi, Scorsese's gangster epic follows the rise and fall of mobster Henry Hill.

BLACKPOOL 2004
David Morrissey stars as a charismatic club-owner intent on turning the seaside town into the Vegas of the North.

CSI 2000-PRESENT
Now filming its 13th season, where the grisly murders continue to keep the Las Vegas Police Department busy.

years, during the period of time when Vegas really became Vegas as we know it today – and Ralph had a lot to do with shaping that," he says.

Certainly, tales of Lamb's tough rule of law abound: he arrested 74 Hells Angels and gave them all haircuts – after dismantling many of their motorcycles – and forced The Beatles to apply for entertainment licences before being allowed to perform in town. But he also broke noses and rearranged dental work to make clear to mobsters exactly who was in charge.

With a solid CV of film roles including *The Big Easy*, *Any Given Sunday*, *Traffic* and *Far From Heaven*, Quaid grew up in cowboy country himself, in Texas, during the time period he is now portraying on screen. "I'm fascinated with that era, and with what America was back then," he nods. "There was such vibrancy; optimism and exploration and sexiness was just in the air. It was electric back then."

Moss rule

Quaid also reveals that the real-life Ralph Lamb, now 85 years old, has been heavily involved and hugely helpful in his preparations for the part. "It saves on the research for a role as far as coming up with the character because he's already there," Quaid says, flashing his famous grin. "And it's wonderful to be able to tap that resource."

Down the corridor, *TF* bumps into Carrie-Anne Moss, who plays one of the show's few prominent female characters, Katherine O'Connell, who grew up on the neighbouring ranch to the Lambs, and is a high-powered prosecutor. "She's very smart, very strong and she's educated," says Moss.

"But she's not married and doesn't have kids, which was unusual for that time."

Moss, 45, is best known for playing another strong female – Trinity in the *Matrix* trilogy – and relished the research for this new role. "I went to the library, and talked to an older woman, who said to me, 'Oh, yeah, other women didn't really like women like us back then who were educated and who hadn't gone down that road [of marriage and children].'"

Moss, herself, is a married mother of three. "We all take for granted now, I think, that we can have children and husbands and work and be creative and have all of that at once," she continues. "But it wasn't like that then." **Jane Mulkerrins**

➤ Vegas begins on Sky Atlantic HD in January.

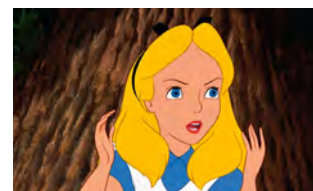
Broadcast news...

All the big events in tellyland on air, and off.



BY GEORGE...

Ladies! Lost in the crazy world of dating? You need to live like George Clooney! That's what the star of comedy pilot *The George Clooney Manifesto* decides to do, after she becomes annoyed with the way society treats single women. *Mean Girls* director Mark Waters is producing the Fox show; Clooney isn't involved.



MAD FOR IT

Alice In Wonderland is hotter than a McDonald's apple pie right now. NBC are working on a pilot called *Wonderland* which picks up after Alice's adventures with a new character named Clara. And The CW are developing a series named, er, *Wonderland*, in which a female cop investigates a strange, magical underworld in Los Angeles.



BAD MOJO

ABC's supernatural drama *666 Park Avenue* experienced devilish bad luck after its sets were flooded in Hurricane Sandy. The Cine Magic Riverfront Studios in Brooklyn were left under 6ft of water, and by the time you read this the show may have been cancelled...



REVVED UP

A US remake of BBC2's *Rev*, which stars Tom Hollander as vicar Adam Smallbone, is in the works. Bob Daily, showrunner on *Desperate Housewives*, will write a script for ABC and the action will relocate from London to Chicago. The producers of the UK show are on board. It's too early to know who'll wear the dog collar.

TV

A history of violence

Truth trounces fiction in a starry revenge drama.

HATFIELDS & MCCOYS ¹⁵

Show ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

2012 **OUT 26 NOVEMBER** DVD, Blu-ray



THE AFTERMATH OF THE American Civil War gave way to another: the feud between the Hatfields and the McCoys. Lasting 28 years, the two families' warring rivalry, perpetuated by pettiness and pride, has gone down in American folk-lore as a tale of love, loss and drawn-out vengeance.

Even so, being the History Channel's first scripted drama, clocking in at around 100 minutes an episode and being directed by the guy who did *Waterworld*, Kevin Reynolds, this three-part mini-series could have easily meandered into an oppressively long bore. Fortunately, that feeling is rare.

Instead, it's a sharply scripted, well-paced drama that is, above all, powered by performance – especially those from the lead patriarchs, Devil Anse Hatfield (Kevin Costner) and Randolph McCoy (Bill Paxton), both of whom are struggling to

keep their fighting families together in a personal post-war squabble that spirals out of control to engulf West Virginia and Kentucky.

The fact that the origin of their differences is not made clear seems apt, rather than just poor storytelling. For *Hatfields & McCoys* doesn't offer up sides to take (although the McCoys do, initially, appear the more foolish) so much as a lesson in the sort of pig-headed stupidity that leads to a confusing, vicious circle of violence – a sense further developed by a Romeo and Juliet-ish subplot in the first episode that unfolds in less-than-romantic directions. That's the strength of

a History Channel production such as this: sometimes, the truth is more engrossing than fiction. **Stephen Kelly**

EXTRAS

► Music video ► Making Of



DALLAS: SEASON 1 ¹²

Show ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

2012 **OUT NOW** DVD

DALLAS IS THE ONGOING STORY of the Ewings, uber-wealthy Texas oil'n'cattle empire builders. The original run spread across three decades (1978-91) and made reckless greed and family dysfunction fun again. To recast and reboot would have been heresy, so TNT have smartly reunited the principal players (Larry Hagman, Patrick Duffy, Linda Gray) and concentrated on the next generation instead. The result is a satisfying mix of nostalgia and new thrills, and fans of the original should lap this soapy nastiness up. **Ken McIntyre**

EXTRAS

► Making Of ► Interviews ► Commentary



THE SIMPSONS: SEASON 15 ¹²

Show ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

2003-4 **OUT 3 DEC** DVD

WHEN EPISODE TITLES MAKE FUN of how long a show has been running – 'Tis The Fifteenth Season' – has it jumped the shark? Not at all. This collection contains an episode where Homer befriends a bear, a guest role for Mr T and a riot of babies referred to as the "tot offensive". Particularly of interest to UK audiences is 'The Regina Monologues', where Tony Blair is mistaken for Mr Bean and the Queen pardons Homer as long as he takes Madonna back to the US. Simpler times. **Matt Chapman**

EXTRAS

► Deleted Scenes ► Featurettes



NEW GIRL: SEASON 1 ¹⁵

Show ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

2011-12 **OUT 3 DEC** DVD

Zoeyphobes be warned: her perky pixie antics are in full effect here. But even the dubious should keep an open mind as *New Girl* has enough warmth and charm to help plug the post-*Friends* void. What helps is that Deschanel's hipster-cutesiness is tempered by the three guys she moves in with – making sure she can't quirk it up unchecked. Some scenarios feel familiar and a few episodes falter, but there's an amiable blend of funny and sweet – with Max Greenfield's series-stealing metrosexual, Schmidt, deserving plaudits. **Matt Maytum**

EXTRAS

► Gag reel ► Featurette ► Commentaries



THIRTYSOMETHING: SEASON 1 ¹²

Show ★★★★★ Extras ★★★★★

1987-8 **OUT 26 NOV** DVD

THIRTYSOMETHING IS THE PATIENT zero of every talky dramedy that sprung up in its wake – a curiously popular late-'80s weeper about a group of white, middle-class, middle-aged yuppies negotiating sleepy suburban crises. The story revolves around ad exec Michael Steadman (Ken Olin) and his wife Hope (Mel Harris), and season one focuses on their quietly crumbling marriage. *Thirtysomething* has its moments, but the glacial pace may turn off attention-deficient viewers. **Ken McIntyre**

EXTRAS

► Featurettes ► Interviews ► Commentaries

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They pull a musket,
you pull a sparkler.
That's the Chicago way.

GAMES SPECIAL

Killer Christmas

Why Ubisoft's killer threequel is the pick of the end-of-year crop.

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

Game ★★★★★

OUT NOW PS3/XBOX 360/WII U/PC

IT'S REACHED THE POINT WHERE explaining *Assassin's Creed* to newcomers is a bit like laying out the futures market to barter economy indigenous tribes. Yes, that generic chap called Desmond is the hero, except when he's using a genetic time machine and reliving the lives of his ancestors in the Crusades and the Renaissance. Yes, he is involved in a centuries-old war between secret Assassin and Templar groups that centres on a whopping Dan Brown-style apocalyptic conspiracy theory. And yes, that is Danny Wallace playing a major support character. No idea.

In other words, *Assassin's Creed* is unique. Other games might feature stabbing people in the neck and tiptoeing around grand cities, and some might even accommodate mysterious end-of-the-world scenarios. But none make use of the past quite like *Assassin's*

Hoodies were even scarier in the 18th century.

Creed does, and none can match its ability through narrative sleight-of-hand to seamlessly set its new adventures anywhere, and at any time, it likes.

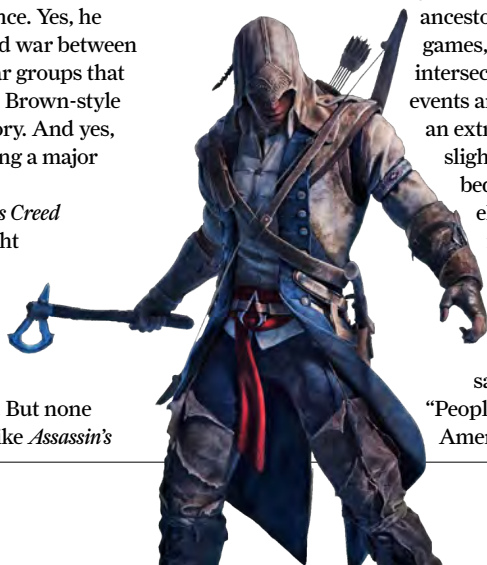
For *Assassin's Creed III* that means Colonial America during the Revolution, as seen through the eyes of Desmond's half-English, half-Native American ancestor, Connor. As in earlier games, Connor's story will intersect with various significant events and figures (think of him as an extraordinarily lethal, and slightly smarter, Forrest Gump) bedding *Assassin's Creed's* elaborate fiction in factual foundations.

"There's something exciting about playing with people's expectations about a time period," says lead writer Corey May. "People have one view of the way American history occurred and

evolved, and for us to say, well, there's this other side to things, and being able to provide multiple perspectives – it's why Connor as a protagonist is so exciting."

May is referring to Connor's mixed heritage, which enables him to view the Revolution as an outsider (a neutrality admittedly tested by his endless knifing of hapless British red coats). The slick combat and urban free-running are still mainstays of the action, with New York and Boston now providing the game's rooftop climbing frame. But the action also moves to the wilderness for the first time, with Connor skipping between trees and along branches, and also to sea, with beautiful, tech-pushing naval battles set among the lashing waves.

Above all, holding it all together and making *Assassin's Creed III* unique, is a sense of history. This Revolutionary setting is no accident – it was chosen to follow the Crusades and the Renaissance, May says, as the next great stepping stone in the development of modern Western society. The game highlights issues of rights and sovereignty – at one point Connor discusses slavery with Ben Franklin. All this, and there's plenty of sneaking up on people and slicing them open. What are you waiting for? **Nathan Ditum**





Wonder words

PlayStation turns a new page...

WONDERBOOK: BOOK OF SPELLS

Game ★★★★★

OUT NOW PS3



IMAGINE YOU'RE A PlayStation executive lining up creative partners for a new project called Wonderbook. You'd have a shortlist of the biggest authors in the world to work through, and at the top would undoubtedly sit J.K. Rowling, with a tentatively whispered note of "Hogwarts?" scribbled alongside. Now, imagine you called her. And then imagine she said "Yes."

As a new generation of as-yet-unannounced consoles looms, it seems odd that PlayStation has apparently abandoned the technological arms race by introducing a playable book. Except this new page-turning peripheral is far from lo-fi, using camera recognition, motion controls and augmented reality to transform each page into an interactive digital pop-up playground.

You can see why the biggest author in the world might be interested –

in a way Wonderbook is continuing Rowling's work of making words an electric, essential experience for kids who otherwise might not be interested.

Rowling's game, undoubtedly Wonderbook's biggest, is *Book Of Spells*, a wand-wielding tour of *Harry Potter* magic as seen through the eyes of a Hogwarts student. It's aimed at younger players, with simple learn-and-repeat mechanics, but certainly feels authentic, featuring incantations and creatures that are ubiquitous for muggles thanks to the books and films.

And yet for all the digital trickery, it still *feels* like a book, with patches of interaction worked into an experience that's dominated by looking and – gulp – learning. This is fine for Rowling's famous literary creations, but it'll be interesting to see how other titles fare on PS3's new page-turning platform, launched with the tagline, "one book, a thousand stories". **Nathan Ditum**



HALO 4

Game ★★★★★

OUT NOW XBOX 360

HE'S BACK! WELL, HE WAS ALREADY SORT of back, but now he's really, actually back – he being Master Chief, original hero of the blockbusting *Halo* series, who's returned with his stern green trousers for another round of shooting aliens between the eyes. At the end of 2007's *Halo 3* our guy had apparently won the religious war against the Covenant but inconveniently found himself drifting through distant space, a problem *Halo 4* solves by landing him on a mysterious Forerunner planet and giving him a new set of targets. A new campaign, a new co-op mode and hours, days and weeks of new late-night multiplayer maps beckon. These are just details, though – the key thing is the Chief's back, this is a new *Halo*, and you're probably getting it anyway. **Rob James**



ZOMBIU

Game ★★★★★

OUT NOW Wii U

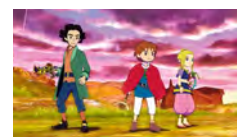
FOR THE MOST PART, THE LAUNCH line-up of Nintendo's new HD console the Wii U consists of games already available on the PS3 and Xbox 360. Enter ZombiU – not an undead university experience but a London-set survival horror which uses the new console's unique tablet-like touchscreen GamePad to give us a thoroughly inventive zombie haranguing. The device is used for aiming weapons, unlocking doors and, more regularly, held up to scan areas for items. This being the apocalypse, provisions are crucial – if your survivor succumbs to the hungry horde they stay dead (forever) and your new character's first task is to kill the old you and retrieve all your loot. It's a promising, and refreshingly gruesome, start for Nintendo's new toy. **Steve Fowler**

'Tis the season to shoot first and drive angry.



The bulk of this year's essential releases and potential stocking fillers are in the shops already. *Need For Speed Most Wanted* is a sprawling open-world racer with sharp magic-hour visuals and a worryingly compelling stat-comparison mechanic that keeps you in constant competition with friends.

Shooter sequels *Call Of Duty: Black Ops 2* and *Medal Of Honor Warfighter* are slick but familiar modern military excursions, doing their chest-beating best to out-macho each other, while at the other end of the scale *LittleBigPlanet Karting* brings cuddly soft engine-rewriting to PlayStation 3 in the name of creating things and being friends.



Looking ahead to 2013 and there's no sign of the usual new year slump. January sees the release of frantic thump-'em-up *Anarchy Reigns* on the 11th, plus the lugubrious reboot of classic demon shooter *Devil May Cry* in the stylised form of *DmC* on the 15th, with a redesigned Dante courtesy of British studio Ninja Theory.

Finally there's also the arrival of *Ni no Kuni: Wrath Of The White Witch* to look forward to on the 25th, a glorious Japanese role player made by Professor Layton creators Level 5 and movie animation giant Studio Ghibli.



BOOKS

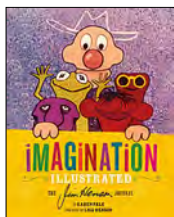
Scrap mettle

Designs, ideas and do-do-do-doodles from the Muppet master...

IMAGINATION ILLUSTRATED: THE JIM HENSON JOURNAL

Book ★★★★★

KAREN FALK | Chronicle Books



THIS YEAR we've had a hit reboot of the Muppet movie franchise, enjoyed a theatrical reissue of 1992's *The Muppet Christmas Carol* (among the top rank of Charles Dickens adapts – no arguments please) and seen Big Bird become a meme of the US presidential election debate. The late Jim Henson's cultural legacy

is alive and well, it seems – but what about all the inspiration and sheer graft that it was built upon? That's where this book comes in.

In her foreword, Henson's daughter Lisa, the current CEO of The Jim Henson Company, describes a loving, busy father who while no great diarist, did keep a "little red book". It's this collection of sketches, doodles, photos, storyboards and notes that forms the basis of Karen Falk's illustrated history – the scrapbook-like design of which

is so intimate, you'll feel like you have the original in your hands.

Henson's work evolved with the times – *The Muppet Show* always had the hippest guests, for instance – which makes Falk's tome a useful overview of late 20th-Century design, from the Hanna-Barbera meets Ronald Searle illustrations Henson produced in the '50s, to a power-dressing Miss Piggy posing for 1980's *Vogue*.

Henson's work reflected not only the world around him, but also the man himself. Most know he voiced Kermit the Frog, but what's less known is how directly and without contrivance the geniality of the muppets emanated from Henson's own personality. This delightful, beautifully presented book makes that obvious. **Ellen E. Jones**

THE MUSIC OF JAMES BOND

Book ★★★★★

JON BURLINGAME | Oxford University Press



RELEGATED TO A FOOTNOTE in most Bond literature, the tunes and scores that have graced the 007 franchise finally get their dues in this exhaustively researched and consistently fascinating chronicle. John Barry is its most prominent presence, despite once dismissing his contributions as "million-dollar Mickey Mouse music". Its coolest surprises are to be found in revelations about the series' multiple near-misses, Frank Sinatra and Amy Winehouse being just two of the names who might have sung Bond themes had the stars aligned differently. **Neil Smith**

BOND ON SET: FILMING SKYFALL

Book ★★★★★

GREG WILLIAMS | Dorling Kindersley



THE FOURTH BOND photo album from Eon's favoured on-set snapper arrives in a sturdy hardback with Daniel Craig staring moodily from its cover. What lies within adheres to a similarly no-nonsense philosophy, snippets of *Skyfall* script offering the only distraction from deceptively casual compositions that give a feeling of being privy to the key players as they piece together their globe-trotting enterprise. Shots of Bérénice Marlohe chilling in her trailer in a protective hairnet are among the many highlights. **Neil Smith**

THE HOBBITS: THE MANY LIVES OF BILBO, FRODO, SAM, MERRY AND PIPPIN

Book ★★★★★

LYNETTE PORTER | I.B. Tauris



IT TURNS OUT THERE'S more to hobbits than hairy feet. Uber-fan Lynette Porter uses their different representations to examine insignificant changes in social attitudes. With Tolkien's complete works by her side, Porter compares hobbits in movies, TV, radio, stage and collectible calendars to see how they differ from The Professor's holy text. Unquestionably thorough, and undeniably boring, this dry lit crit is strictly for people who shuffle around with their knees in furry slippers trying to ward off trolls. **Paul Bradshaw**

Three more...

Another Star Wars book? No, a book about Star Wars.



STAR WARS: THE ESSENTIAL READER'S COMPANION

★★★★★

The expanded Jedi-verse of prose tie-ins gets explored in a tactile treatment by Lucas-lore expert Pablo Hidalgo. Feel the force of coffee-table tome fetishism as you meet Drub McKumb and Darth Scabrous.



FILM CRAFT: PRODUCTION DESIGN

★★★★★

The latest volume in Ilex's Film Craft series is a beautiful, accessible look into the world of production designers. Less a handbook, more an informative, detailed insight into working in the industry.



SHERLOCK: THE CASEBOOK

★★★★★

While we wait for series three, this stocking filler will take the edge off the cravings. Combining a mocked-up version of Dr Watson's casebook and cast interviews, it's a sweet, if inessential, introduction to Holmes' world.

Spaced out: Dr. David Bowman (Keir Dullea) in Kubrick's 1968 sci-fi epic.



RANT

Is it just me? ...Or is 2001: A Space Odyssey the most overrated film of all time?

asks Stephen Kelly

PERHAPS I'M WRONG. Perhaps it's just something I don't understand – like vegetables or Stoke. Perhaps, I'm just that guy jabbering on about the emperor's balls when he is, in fact, wearing a rather nifty three-piece suit. But I doubt it, so here it goes: Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a film that no one actually really likes.

Now, judging from all the jaws that have just hit the floor, I'm guessing that may have come as a shock to you. "Of course I like it!" I hear you cry. "It's a masterpiece!" But do you really like it? Or are you merely a victim of pop-culture doublethink – the natural defence of the sacred cow? Because all I ever hear are excuses for what is, essentially, an atrocious mess.

"It's all about the visuals," argues one friend, adamantly. "The artistic nuances – the iconography!" A popular point, of course: a space station waltzing across the Earth, the pristine purity of a white space ship interior, HAL's bleeding-red central core: Kubrick's vision is striking, and would serve as a template for many others to follow.

But looks don't make an enjoyable film, any more than a polished Cadillac drives without an engine. A point hammered home by the fact that the aforementioned Ms All-About-The-Visuals has never been able to stay awake for the final 30 minutes. (She still insists on it being a masterpiece, though.)

That's the thing with *2001: A Space Odyssey*: it looks lovely, but it's soulless – a film devoid of warmth, plot or point. All of which could be vaguely forgiven

if it wasn't such a dick about it. For, you see, *2001* is a film that enjoys itself far more than anyone else

does. It detaches itself from the audience with a sense of arrogance – sneering from a great height, taunting with half an hour of monkeys, meandering shots of shit floating around and a pace so brutally oppressive it's like trying to run a marathon while dragging a dead cow

'It looks lovely but it's soulless, devoid of warmth, plot or point'

behind you. And all for what? A bafflingly boring beginning, a mildly promising middle – with the sinister execution of HAL being the closest Kubrick gets to an actual plot – and a truly catastrophic ending. Three acts that not only bear hardly any narrative relation to each other, but also no reward.

And that's what grates: it's one thing to be ambiguous with your storytelling, it's quite another to hold explanation back from a script in a pretentious attempt at faux-depth and profundity. A trope that, as anyone who's seen *Prometheus* can attest, has filtered down to the very worst aspects of science fiction just as much as its aesthetic has informed the best of it.

Can I accept that it's a worthy foundation for the very best of serious science fiction to be built upon? Sure. But can I call it a classic? I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that. Or is it just me?

Agree or disagree? Have your say at totalfilm.com/forums > Magazine > Is It Just Me? A selection will be printed next issue.

In our last issue, Tom Dawson argued that Jeff Bridges was the '70s' finest actor. Readers respond...

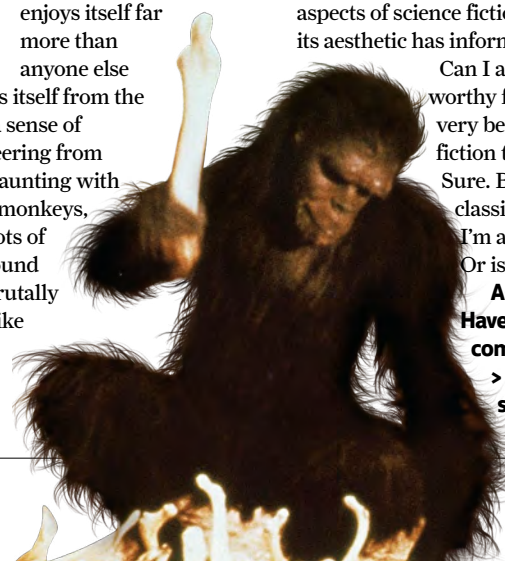
THEDAWG
Jeff Bridges is a dude and great actor, but he's never given us a Travis Bickle or Michael Corleone.

CAT ELKINS
Half those Bridges films I've never even heard of! Everyone's heard of *Chinatown*, *The Godfather* and *Mean Streets*! Must be for a reason...

WAVYDAVE
Right on the money. For too long it's been all about Pacino/De Niro. And unlike them, Jeff hasn't succumbed to any *Meet The Fockers*/ *Jack And Jill*-style dignity-loss...

GRILLMAN
My favourite Bridges is his dad, Lloyd. Or *The Bridges Of Madison County*.

GOADFELLA
I don't think he hit his prime until *The Big Lebowski*; his '70s work is respectable, but he's close to God from *The Dude* onwards.



Classic horror:
Friedkin on set of
The Exorcist (1973).

REALLY INSTANT EXPERT

> Inspired by *Citizen Kane*, Friedkin dreams of being an auteur in Orson's image...
> ...before scoring consecutive box office hits with **Popeye Doyle** and **Father Merrin**.
> *Sorcerer*, *Cruising* and other costly flops leave him out in the cold...
> ...until *Bug* and *Killer Joe* show Tinseltown what it might have been missing.

INSTANT EXPERT

William Friedkin

Nutshell...

A director who, after years living in the shadow of a '70s heyday, is now enjoying a belated rehabilitation.

I WAS ARROGANT BEYOND my talent," William Friedkin once admitted. It was a rare bout of humility from a maverick director who, emboldened by the back-to-back success of *The French Connection* (1971) and *The Exorcist* (1973), initiated a hubristic campaign of bridge-burning that turned him from wunderkind to pariah virtually overnight.

Or at least that's the way Peter Biskind spins it in *Easy Riders, Raging Bulls*, a book that depicts Friedkin as a raging egomaniac who bit every hand that fed him. Friedkin disputes this portrait, although he has confirmed one key anecdote: a crowing taunt to Alfred Hitchcock at the 1972 DGA awards, inspired by a rebuke he received from the master seven years earlier for not wearing a tie while directing one of

Hitch's TV dramas. "I said, 'One day I'm going to get this fat bastard'," he recalled in 1998. "And I did."

'Hurricane Billy' has never been one to take a slight lying down. Nor was he likely to stay in the Chicago TV station mailroom where he first started out, soon contriving to get behind the camera on a succession of shows and documentaries. One of the latter, 1962's *The People Vs Paul Crump*, made enough of a stir to get its subject's death sentence commuted to life imprisonment.

A step up to features appeared inevitable, even if the results – Sonny and Cher vehicle *Good Times* (1967), burlesque comedy *The Night They Raided Minsky's* (1968) – lacked finesse. Yet they were enough to get him *TFC*, a grittily uncompromising New York policier that landed Friedkin a best director Oscar at the age of 36.

Horror sensation *The Exorcist* cemented his commercial acumen, though its triumph came at a cost to Ellen Burstyn (left with a spine injury after being yanked to the floor by a harness) and Father William O'Malley (whom Friedkin bitch-slapped in order to generate an emotional response). Some dubbed him 'Wacky Willy'; many

more itched for him to fail. And fail he did, first with his disastrous *The Wages Of Fear* reprise *Sorcerer* (1977) and then with notorious gay-killer thriller *Cruising* (1980).

The downward descent was briefly halted by *To Live And Die In L.A.* (1985), an influential neo-noir that launched the careers of Willem Dafoe and *CSI*'s William Petersen. But then came *The Guardian* (1990), *Jade* (1995) and *Rules Of Engagement* (2000): stinkers one and all that not only crashed and burned at the box office but also showed their director to be embarrassingly at odds with the prevailing cultural wind.

In recent years, though, that wind has blown kinder, thanks to Friedkin rediscovering the knack for stage to screen transfer that spawned his early versions of *The Boys In The Band* (1970) and *The Birthday Party* (1968) with his twin Tracy Letts adapts *Bug* (2006) and *Killer Joe* (2011). He's also been writing his memoirs, which are sure to make juicy reading when they are published next year. "My career has come about as a result of ambition, luck and the grace of God," he summarises. "Notice I didn't mention talent." **Neil Smith**

Key movies



THE FRENCH CONNECTION

1971 ★★★★★

Renowned for its car chase, Friedkin's authentic cop yarn broke new ground with its ambiguous hero, docu-realism and audaciously downbeat ending.



THE EXORCIST

1973 ★★★★★

Still shocking, Friedkin's tale of demonic possession gets as much power from its psycho-sexual subtext as its more outré scenes of crucifix masturbation and projectile vomit.



TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.

1985 ★★★★★

Similar to *Miami Vice* and *Heat*, this thriller about a Fed on the trail of a forger also presages *Collateral* with Friedkin's neon-lit view of LA's seamy underbelly.



KILLER JOE

2011 ★★★★★

You'll never want to eat fried chicken again after seeing how Mr McConaughy misuses it in this black farce about a clan who live to regret hiring an assassin. A blistering return to form.

TOTAL FILM competition



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A SHOOTING EXPERIENCE WITH ALEX CROSS!

Following hits *Kiss The Girls* and *Along Came A Spider*, *Alex Cross* is the latest action/thriller based on the work of bestselling author James Patterson. Tyler Perry stars as Cross, a detective/psychologist who meets his match in the form of a serial killer with the artful name Picasso (Matthew Fox, pictured above right). The stage is set for a game of cat and mouse; but when the mission turns personal, Cross is pushed to the edge of his limits.

Directed by Rob Cohen (xXx, *The Fast And The Furious*) and co-starring Edward Burns and Jean Reno, *Alex Cross* arrives in cinemas on 30 November. To mark the occasion, we've teamed up with Entertainment Film Distributors to offer one reader and a friend a shooting experience.

After learning weapons basics, you'll get the chance to shoot from a variety of distances with an air rifle before trying your hand at clay-pigeon

shooting. You'll also receive £100 travel expenses. Three runners-up will win a pair of Odeon cinema passes. For a chance to win, text the answer to the following question or enter online.

Which of these is NOT an Alex Cross novel?

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------|
| A <i>Double Cross</i> | CROSS A |
| B <i>Cross Fire</i> | CROSS B |
| C <i>Criss Cross</i> | CROSS C |

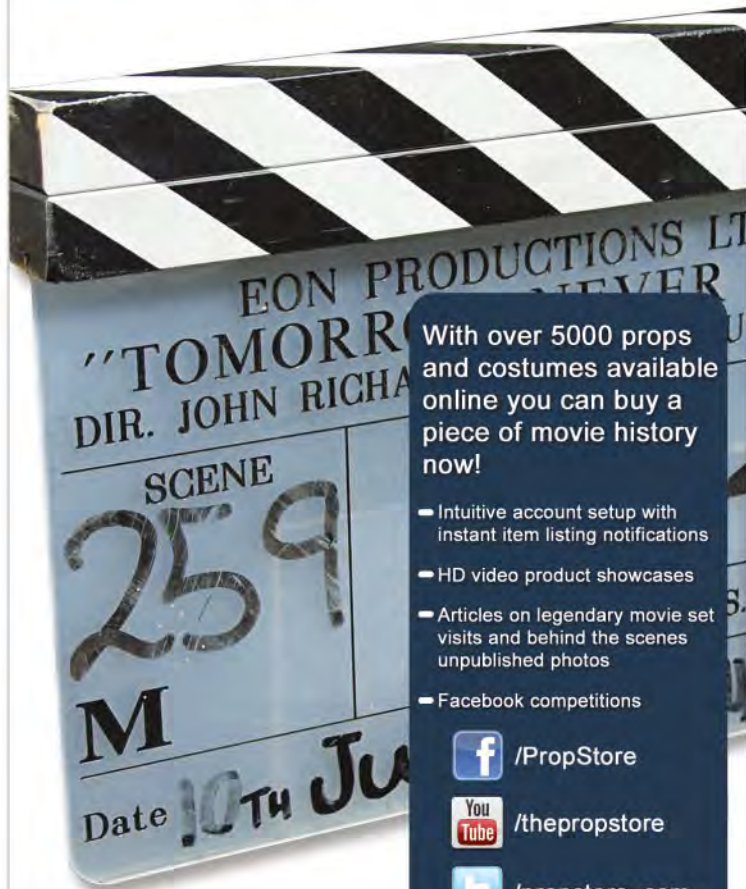
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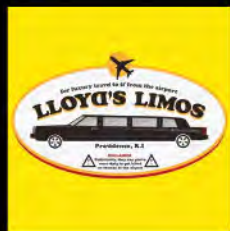
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Joseph Gordon-Levitt in *Mysterious Skin*



The horrible truth: Neil (Joseph Gordon-Levitt) and Brian (Brady Corbet) relive their past.

How the boy wonder took off...

ACCORDING TO ROLLING Stone's Peter Travers, Philip Seymour Hoffman recently joined Joseph Gordon-Levitt's fan club, raving about JGL's ability to make something so dreary as "integrity" gripping in *The Dark Knight Rises*. But why stop there? JGL also made a cycling thriller (*Premium Rush*) fly this year. He gave the coolest Bruce Willis performance in years in *Looper*. Better still, big Phil could have rewound to *Mysterious Skin*, where Gordon-Levitt first proved there was more to him than a cheeky grin.

Gregg Araki's low-key 2004 adap of Scott Heim's novel risks being blurred in the aftermath of Batman and Bruce busting blocks, but its high-risk strike rate shouldn't be forgotten. It delivered complex, compassionate character portraits of two teen survivors of abuse at a time when other films (*Happiness*, *L.I.E.*, *The Woodsman*) were tackling the subject from the arguably easier, faux-edgy abuser's POV. For JGL, it prised his smile from TV's *3rd Rock From The Sun* and shot him into serious contention, proving he could marshal tough/tender, wired/wounded layers into one role.

Doubling drives the plot, which cuts between two Kansas teens in 1991 and their childhood in 1981. One is the shy Brian (Brady Corbet), who believes

the big hole in his memories is the result of alien abduction in 1981. The other is Neil (JGL), a teen hustler with a "black hole" where his heart should be, whose memories prove vital to Brian's lost time.

We know what the secret in Brian's repressed memory is, but that doesn't matter: by making it a given that their sports teacher 'Coach' abused them, Araki shifts the focus from crude reveals to subtle psychology and lets his cast take the strain. And boy, do they. Corbet is internalised, affecting. JGL is a fireworks display by contrast, crackling with carnal energy... Peer closer though, and his nuances dazzle more than his sparks.

Since Neil doesn't waste words when a mean James Dean stare will do, JGL lets his face and body do the talking. On the surface he's all limbs and 'tude, a statement smoker,

his posture a walking "Whadevva". JGL keeps him on the move, as if he's always trying to wriggle free from something: watch how he dangles out of a car window or hangs upside down off a swing, doing anything but sitting still.

This ever-alert edginess hints at cracks in Neil's carapace, cracks that JGL opens without milking our sympathy. When his friend Wendy leaves Kansas for New York and says to him, "You better come see me soon, asshole," he looks startled, like he's been moved and can't tell why, his emotions shut down for safety. When Neil moves to New York and gets beaten by a john, we're in bits because we know that the self-assurance that got him into trouble is his way of coping with trauma.

When Neil meets Brian for the first time since 1981, JGL throws us another loop. On Christmas Eve, the pair break into Coach's old house and bond. They're like ghosts haunting the house that haunted them, but there's warmth in the way Neil cradles Brian, telling him what really happened in '81.

The scene is exposition-heavy but it proves that with the right treatment, 15 minutes of nattering can magnetise. JGL sells it, his dialogue etched with weight, his words wounded and his voice trembling with terribly knowledge as he pinpoints the hurt beneath Neil's hustle.

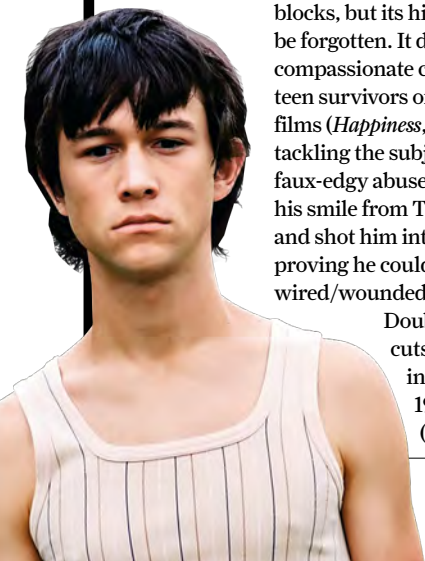
And the hope beneath the hurt. Heartbreaking as the scene is, the best thing about it is the way it teases from mutual support a fragile sense of optimism without seeming glib. Which is what impressed Seymour Hoffman: Gordon-Levitt's ability to sell us unlikely gambits. Although next to the contained mix of trauma, turmoil and tenderness in Neil, *TDKR* almost looks like playtime. **Kevin Harley**

But TOTAL FILM doesn't love...



The Fourth Kind

Watching this close encounter of the turd kind is like having grey matter extracted. Milla Jovovich's quack probes patients' dreams about owls and discovers aliens are to blame. The hypno-sessions and abduction recreations claim to be based on truth, but it's bogus. Worse still, boring. Forget it.



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